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Kitchens and Communion

The Eucharist and Communal Meals in the Fourth and Fifth Centuries

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Abstract

Early Christian Eucharists were meals that consisted not only of the token bits of bread and wine that we normally associate with the Christian Eucharist, but also other food stuffs like cheese, olives, milk, honey, etc. They were not just for ritual purposes but also for provisioning. By the end of the third century, the Eucharist appears to have shifted, in most places, from a meal to a token distribution of bread and wine. As a result, most scholars assume that the Eucharist stopped being celebrated in a meal context by the end of the third century, leading to the "normative" Eucharist of the fourth century. However, remnants of the once Eucharistic meal can be seen beyond the third and fourth centuries in: the archeological evidence; the church orders; legislative texts; and memorial and funerary customs known broadly as refrigeria. This article looks at this evidence to argue for a broader understanding of Eucharistic practice in the fourth and fifth centuries.

Keywords

ʿAin el-Gedida | Kellis | Eucharist | Christian Meals | Liturgy | Refrigeria | Agape | Early Christian

Kitchens and Communion

The Eucharist and Communal Meals in the Fourth and Fifth Centuries *

Nathan P. Chase

1 Introduction

Early Christian Eucharists were meals that consisted not only of the token bits of bread and wine that we normally associate with the Christian Eucharist, but also other food stuffs like cheese, olives, milk, honey, etc. These Eucharistic meals were not just for ritual purposes but also for provisioning, and they were linked to food doles given to Christians by the church.[1] By the end of the third century, the Eucharist appears to have shifted, in most places, from a meal to a token distribution of bread and wine.[2] As a result, most scholars assume that the Eucharist stopped being celebrated in a meal context by the end of the third century, leading to the "normative" Eucharist of the fourth century. This normative Eucharist was celebrated as a token distribution on Sunday mornings and was struc-

* I would like to thank Kimberly Belcher for looking over this article and Theresa Rice for copyediting it. A special thanks to the reviewers for their helpful feedback. All errors remain my own.

1 Cf. Clemens Leonhard, Morning *Salutationes* and the Decline of Sympotic Eucharists in the Third Century, in: ZAC 18 (2014) 420–442; Andrew McGowan, "The Firstfruits of God's Creatures". Bread, Eucharist and the Ancient Economy, in: Teresa Berger (ed.), Full of Your Glory. Liturgy, Cosmos, Creation, Collegeville 2019, 69–86. In general, you either attended the *symposium* or received your food dole the next day at the morning *salutatio*.

2 Cf. Paul Bradshaw – Maxwell Johnson, The Eucharistic Liturgies. Their Evolution and Interpretation, Collegeville 2012, 1–59. This is also the conclusion of Stewart, see Alistair C. Stewart, Breaking Bread. The Emergence of Eucharist and *Agape* in Early Christian Communities, Grand Rapids 2023, 34–36.

tured around the liturgy of the Word and the liturgy of the Eucharist.[3] That normative Eucharistic celebration closely follows our own to this day. It should be noted, however, that the term "normative" does not do justice to the diversity of Eucharistic celebrations in the early church, in particular the different types of Eucharistic celebrations – the Mass- or *symposium*-type (what I would term the regular or weekly) Eucharist, the initiatory Eucharist, the Eucharist celebrated during ordination rites, the Paschal Eucharist, and funerary Eucharists.[4] It also does not take into account the fact that early Christian communities undoubtedly considered their own mode of celebration "normal", no matter the form. Nevertheless, most every other possible term also shares similar limitations and so normative will be used here, acknowledging that it should not be anachronistically applied to the first three centuries, in particular.

Turning back to the evidence, remnants of the once Eucharistic meal can be seen beyond the third century in the archeological evidence,

3 Here I am borrowing the language of "'normative' Eucharist" from Stewart, see in Stewart, Breaking Bread *passim*. There are limitations, however, to the use of this terminology.

4 This serves as reminder of the different types of Eucharistic celebrations in the early church, see Harald Buchinger, Liturgiegeschichte im Umbruch. Fallbeispiele aus der Alten Kirche, in: Albert Gerhards – Benedikt Kranemann (eds.), Dynamik und Diversität des Gottesdienstes. Liturgiegeschichte in neuem Licht (QD 289), Freiburg 2018, 152–184, esp. 159 f.; id., Strukturwandel eucharistischen Betens. Zu Ursprung und Funktion der Postcommunio, in: Jürgen Bärsch et al. (eds.), Ecclesia de Liturgia. zur Bedeutung des Gottesdienstes für Kirche und Gesellschaft. Festschrift für Winfried Haunerland, Regensburg 2021, 169–181. See also Hans-Ulrich Weidemann, Taufe und Mahlgemeinschaft. Studien zur Vorgeschichte der altkirchlichen Taufeucharistie (WUNT 338), Tübingen 2014. For an extended treatment of the basic shape(s) of the Eucharist in the first three centuries and the diversity of types of Eucharistic celebrations in Predrag Bukovec, Die frühchristliche Eucharistie (WUNT 499), Tübigen 2023, 474–489. In a now dated but still useful study, Johannes Wagner also pointed to the existence of small gatherings of Christians for Eucharistic celebrations in the early Church, some of which were funeral or martyr commemorations, see Johannes Wagner, Altchristliche Eucharistiefeiern im kleinen Kreis, Trier 1993 [reprint of the unpublished dissertation Universität Bonn 1949]. Additionally, it should be noted that amid this diversity of practice, there was some common consensus around what was the Eucharist, see Nathan P. Chase, The Anaphoral Tradition in the "Barcelona Papyrus" (StTT 53), Turnhout 2023, 52 f. For further indications of the diversity that existed in early Christian practice, see n. 187.

the church orders, legislative texts, and memorial and funerary customs known broadly as *refrigeria*. This article will explore the connection between the Eucharist, Eucharistic meals, and communal meals into the fifth century, in order to show the close relationship between each of these meal practices into the late patristic period. In particular, this paper will look at the spectrum of meal practices in Christian communities and the evidence for the continuation of the celebration of the Eucharist within a meal context in some places beyond the early fourth century.

2 *Kitchens in Churches: The Egyptian Archeological Evidence*

It is worth looking first at the archeological evidence from the fourth century that indicates a strong connection between the Eucharist and communal meals and possibly the endurance of the celebration of the Eucharist within a meal context. Two churches from the Dakhla Oasis in Egypt, for instance, have kitchens within their church complexes.[5] Those churches are ʿAin el-Gedida and the Large East Church at Kellis, both dated to the fourth century. Another possible example is the church at ʿAin el-Sabil, which is also dated to the fourth century and is largely analogous to the Large East Church at Kellis and may have been modeled after it – for this reason it will not be taken up here.[6] The presence of kitchens in these church complexes raises questions about the spectrum of meal practices in these communities and how those related to the Eucharistic celebration. As a result, it is worth looking in more detail at these churches with

5 While monastic communities had kitchens as well, these were not, to my knowledge, within the church but were elsewhere in the monastic complex. For monastic kitchens, see Gábor Kalla, The Refectory and the Kitchen in the Early Byzantine Monastery of Tell Bi'a (Syria). The Egyptian and Palestinian Connections, in: Louise Blanke – Jennifer Cromwell (eds.), Monastic Economies in Late Antique Egypt and Palestine, London 2023, 181–211; Darlene Brooks Hedstrom, Cooking, Baking, and Serving. A Window into the Kitchen of Egyptian Monastic Households and the Archaeology of Cooking, in: Louise Blanke – Jennifer Cromwell (eds.), Monastic Economies in Late Antique Egypt and Palestine, London 2023, 152–180.

6 Cf. Nicola Aravecchia, Early Christianity at Amheida (Egypt's Dakhla Oasis). A Fourth-Century Church (Amheida 7), New York 2024, 32 f.

kitchens and what this may indicate about their community's Eucharistic and meal practices.[7]

2.1 ʿAin el-Gedida

The fourth-century church complex at ʿAin el-Gedida (*Figure 1*) is divided into two distinct spaces: the worship space (B5) and another assembly room (A46). The latter space (A46) may have served at a later date as a refectory (see p. 223 f. and 270 f.). The complex also contains a cooking space (B6) as well as a pantry (B9 and upper area of B10). Directly next to the church complex there is another cooking space on the lower level of B10, but this space does not appear to have any correlation to the church complex.[8] Across the passageway (street B12) from the church complex there were also a series of ovens in what may have been a communal bakery (B14–15).[9] The exact type of community at ʿAin el-Gedida cannot, at present, be determined with much certainty. Even though originally thought to be possibly monastic in nature, the site is more likely an *epoiki-*

7 It should also be noted that kitchens have been discovered within synagogues in this same period, see the synagogue at Ostia, which is now dated to the third to sixth centuries. Cf. L. Michael White, Synagogue and Society in Imperial Ostia. Archaeological and Epigraphic Evidence, in: HTR 90 (1997) 23–58; Brent Nongbri, Archival Research on the Excavation of the Synagogue at Ostia. A Preliminary Report, in: JSJ 46 (2015) 366–402. The presence of these kitchens may also be indicative of the pagan practice of including dining rooms in temples in antiquity. For a short summary of that practice, see Ramsay MacMullen, The Second Church. Popular Christianity A.D. 200–400 (WGRW.S 1), Atlanta 2009, 23 f. For later examples in Egypt, see Deir al-Baramus, which has a bakery connected to the church: Karel C. Innemée, Excavations at the Site of Deir al-Baramus 2002–2005, in: Bulletin de la Société d'archéologie copte 44 (2005) 55–68.

8 Cf. Nicola Aravecchia, ʿAin El-Gedida. 2006–2008 Excavations of a Late Antique Site in Egypt's Western Desert (Amheida 4), New York 2018, 143–151.

9 Another large-scale kitchen/bakery with three ovens (A6) was also discovered south of the church in the south half of the mound, see id., ʿAin El-Gedida, 55–59. This would have been connected to the area of the church by a north-south passageway.

on, a small-scale agricultural settlement often housing temporary workers.[10] It is worth looking at these spaces in more detail.

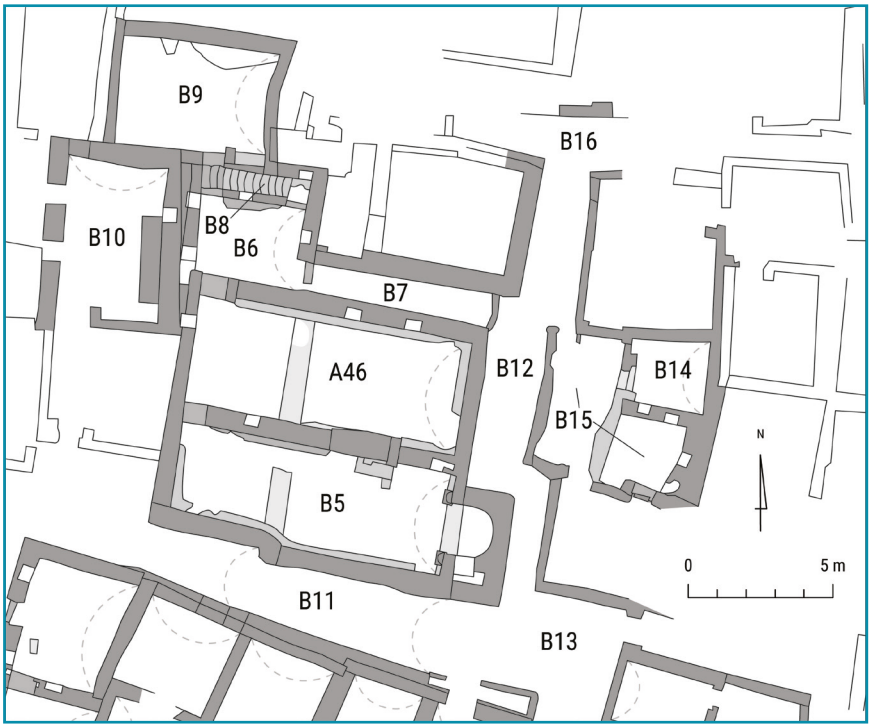

Figure 1: Plan of the church complex at ʿAin el-Gedida
© ʿAin el-Gedida Project; tracing by K. DeMondo. Used with permission.

A46[11] was originally connected to the central worship space (B5) by two passageways (*Figure 2*). The larger passageway included a stepped podium that likely functioned as an ambo and was clearly visible to people in both A46 and B5. Over time, this passageway was sealed, partially destroying the podium. The exact function of A46 throughout its history is not clear. It could have functioned as a gathering space and/or refectory. However, while the large passageway was open, it may have functioned as

10 Cf. Id., Catechumens, Women, and Agricultural Laborers. Who Used the Fourth-Century Hall at the Church of ʿAin El-Gedida, Egypt?, in: JLA 15 (2022) 193–230, here: 220–224.

11 Cf. Id., ʿAin El-Gedida, 110–116; Id., Catechumens; Id. – Nathan Chase, The Use and Capacity of Early Churches in Dakhla Oasis. A Liturgical and Archaeological Perspective, in: Antiquité Tardive 31 (2023) 251–270.

Figure 2: Image of B5 and A46 at at ʿAin el-Gedida
© ʿAin el-Gedida Project. Used with permission.

part of the worship space, perhaps for women, or it may have been for groups excluded from the Eucharistic liturgy like the catechumens. It may have even functioned as a multi-use space.

B6[12] served as both a kitchen and anteroom for the church complex, from which there was access to other rooms. Impressions indicative of food storage vessels for cooking were discovered in the space on the ground by the south wall (*Figure 3*) and on a mud-brick platform (BF85, *Figure 4*). A hearth (BF81) was also discovered in the space (*Figure 4*). B6 is also connected to B9,[13] which is only accessible from B6 and was "possibly used as a storage room/pantry in association with the latest occupational phase of the kitchen [B6]"[14].

12 Cf. Aravecchia, ʿAin El-Gedida, 116–124.

13 Cf. ibid., 136–142.

14 Ibid., 139.

Figure 3: Imprints of vessels left of white line
Aravecchia, ʿAin el-Gedida, PL. 3.49. Used with permission.

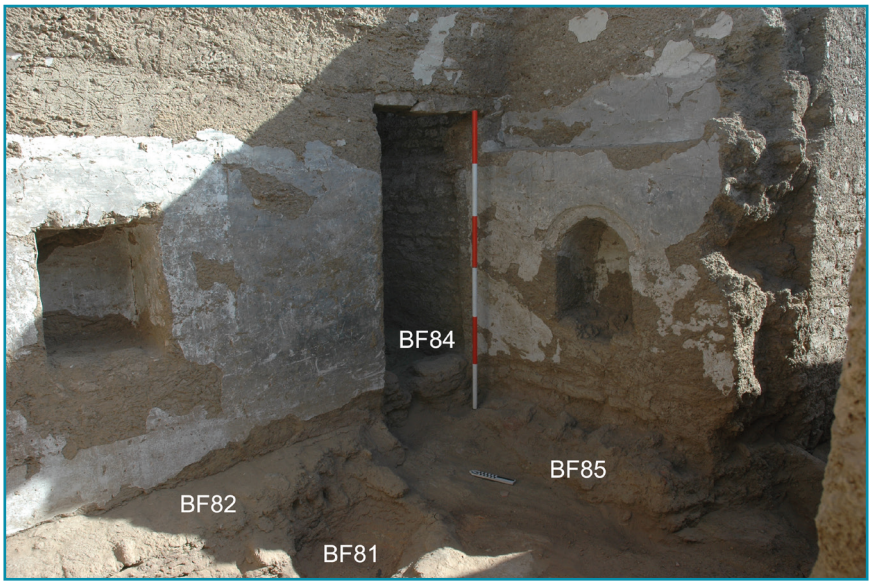

Figure 4: Hearth at BF81
Aravecchia, ʿAin el-Gedida, PL. 3.47. Used with permission.

While the lower level of B10[15] appears to have also functioned as a kitchen, the exact relationship between this space (B10) and the church complex is not entirely clear. There is no communication between the lower level of B10 and the complex. However, the upper room of B10 was accessible via the staircase in the church complex. On that upper level, there were features indicative of food storage containers. All of this leads Nicola Aravecchia to argue that:

> [T]he roof of room B10 is not only architecturally connected to the anteroom/kitchen of the church complex (room B6), but also seems functionally linked to it. The fact that people inside the church complex were allowed to freely access and use the vaulted roof of room B10 suggests that the latter was not owned by a private villager or a family.[16]

The upper room of B10 functioned in some way as a food storage area, and was connected directly to the church complex, unlike the lower room,

15 Cf. ibid., 143–151.

16 Ibid., 147.

which appears to have functioned as a kitchen but which did not have direct access to the church complex.

Rooms B14 and B15[17] go together and "are identifiable as a small open-air working area, possibly a kitchen/bakery (B15), furnished with a small storage area (B14)"[18]. B15 contained a number of ovens – three on the west wall (BF128) and possibly a fourth (B176) on the north wall – as well as a clay stove (*Figure 5*).[19] At some point, the ovens were dismantled and no longer used. The relationship between these rooms and the church complex across the street (B12) is not clear. Aravecchia notes:

> An intriguing fact is that the passage [into B15] is precisely located across the street from the entrance into corridor B7 (and the church complex). One could suppose that room B15 (a bakery serving the needs of a large group of people) was built in relation to the church complex, particularly the anteroom/kitchen (B6) and the large gathering hall (A46). This is a fascinating possibility, supported, among other things, by the established relative chronology, but incontrovertible evidence is lacking.[20]

In any event, the presence of multiple ovens suggests a significant food production space. It is worth noting that another significant food produc-

17 Cf. ibid., 174–186.

18 Ibid., 174.

19 For some further background on ovens and bread baking in Egypt in this period, see Delwen Samuel, Brewing and Baking, in: Paul T. Nicholson – Ian Shaw (eds.), Ancient Egyptian Materials and Technology, Cambridge 2000, 537–576; David Depraetere, A Comparative Study on the Construction and the Use of the Domestic Bread Oven in Egypt during the Graeco-Roman and Late Antique/Early Byzantine Period, in: MDAI.K 58 (2002) 119–156; Roberta Tomber, Baking Bread in Roman Egypt, in: Bettina Bader – Mary F. Ownby (eds.), Functional Aspects of Egyptian Ceramics in Their Archaeological Context. Proceedings of a Conference Held at the McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research, Cambridge, July 24–25, 2009 (OLA 217), Leuven 2012, 119–137. For a summary of bread production in monasteries, see Ewa Wipszycka, Resources and Economic Activities of the Egyptian Monastic Communities (4th–8th Century), in: JJP 41 (2011) 186–195.

20 Aravecchia, ʿAin El-Gedida, 193.

tion space also appears south of the church complex.[21] There is also evidence for communal ovens in Egypt.[22]

Figure 5: Ovens in B15
Aravecchia, ʿAin el-Gedida, PL. 4.35. Used with permission.

2.2 Large East Church at Kellis

ʿAin el-Gedida is not the only extant fourth-century church complex in Egypt to contain a kitchen. Another example comes from the Large East Church at Kellis (*Figure 6*).[23] Kellis was a typical village in Upper Egypt, also in the Dakhla Oasis, and the Large East Church was constructed to support its growing population.[24] In the southern rooms of the complex,

21 See n. 9.

22 Cf. Depraetere, A Comparative Study.

23 Cf. Gillian E. Bowen, The Fourth-Century Churches at Ismant El-Kharab, in: Colin A. Hope – Gillian E. Bowen (eds.), Dakhleh Oasis Project. Preliminary Reports on the 1994–1995 to 1998–1999 Field Seasons (Dakhleh Oasis Project 11), Oxford 2002, 65-85, here: 71.

24 Cf. ead., The Small East Church at Ismant El-Kharab, in: Gillian E. Bowen – Colin A. Hope (eds.), The Oasis Papers 3. Proceedings of the Third Inter-

Room 4 "preserves two ovens and must have served as a kitchen"[25] (*Figure 7*). More recently Bowen has described them as an oven and a hearth.[26] Interestingly, this room had direct access to the church via the southern nave.

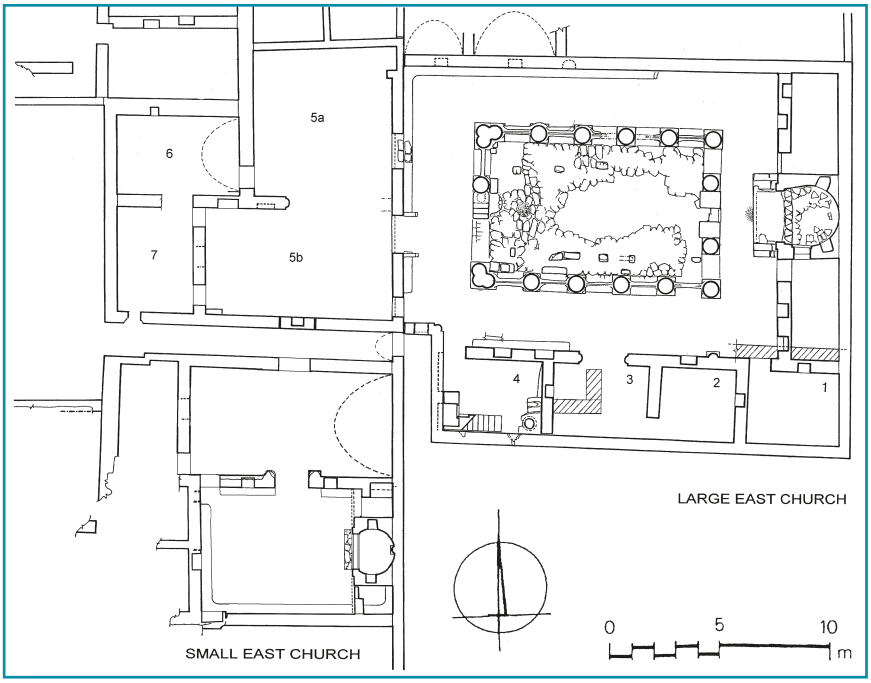

Figure 6: Kellis, East Churches
Bowen, The Fourth-Century Churches at Ismant El-Kharab, Fig. 2.
© Dakhleh Oasis Project. Used with permission.

2.3 Reasons for Kitchens in These Church Complexes

It is clear that there was a strong relationship between these cooking spaces and the worship spaces of the church, and they are not simply part of the same church or monastic complex. ʿAin el-Gedida's worship space

national Conference of the Dakhleh Oasis Project (Dakhleh Oasis Project. Monograph 14), Oxford 2003, 153–165, here: 164.

25 Ead., The Fourth-Century Churches, 71.

26 Cf. Colin A. Hope – Gillian E. Bowen (eds.), The Excavations at Ismant Al-Kharab, vol. 2: The Christian Monuments of Kellis. The Churches and Cemeteries (Dakhleh Oasis Project. Monograph 23), Philadelphia 2024, 97–99.

Figure 7: Large East Church, Kellis, oven and hearth
Bowen Pl. 4. © Dakhleh Oasis Project. Used with permission.

was only accessible through a kitchen (in addition to the nearby bakery) and Kellis' kitchen was directly off the worship space. The presence of these cooking spaces within or in some way connected to these two church complexes leads to a few questions: were these food preparation spaces used in conjunction with the ritual spaces? If so, how might these relate to Eucharistic and non-Eucharistic meals that could have been celebrated in these spaces? Furthermore, how might this archeological evidence supplement our understanding of the ritual (and non-ritual) distribution of bread and other foodstuffs within the early Christian community?

The relationship between these kitchens and the Eucharistic celebration within these church complexes is especially interesting, but also difficult to determine. With regard to the kitchen at the Large East Church at Kellis, Gillian Bowen has suggested that the church complex's oven was used "perhaps for baking bread for the Eucharist"[27]. This seems certain, especially given the witness of the *Canons of Athanasius*, which is dated

27 Bowen, The Fourth-Century Churches, 71. For an overview of the treatment of the offerings for the Eucharist in Egypt, see Ramez Mikhail, The Presentation of the Lamb. The Prothesis and Preparatory Rites of the Coptic Liturgy (SECL 2), Münster 2020, 53–123.

to the late fourth or early fifth century from Egypt.[28] The Arabic version in canon 34 states that: "It is not permitted unto a priest to go out on account of the bread of offering and to stand at the oven, but as he serveth the people, so shall the subdeacon serve him."[29] This suggests a link between the oven and the Eucharistic celebration. But there is also an indication in the Coptic version in canon 64 that the bread should be freshly baked: "There shall not any stale bread be offered upon the altar in any church, but bread warm or fresh which is such as hath been but lately baked."[30] Taken together, this seems to suggest that an oven would need to be near the church complex. Later 11th century sources talk about whether the bread should be baked in a domestic context or the church.[31] The matter is also addressed in Abū al-Barakāt ibn Kabar's 14th century text *The Lamp of Darkness*, which indicates in ch. 17 that the bread baked for the Eucharist was baked in the church.[32] We also see this in the archeological evidence from Egypt and Ethiopia, where an oven is part of a room or separate structure named "Bethlehem", which may be separated from the

28 For a summary of the text, its date, and provenance, see Ágnes T. Mihálykó, The Christian Liturgical Papyri. An Introduction (STAC 114), Tübingen 2019, 44; Ewa Wipszycka, A Certain Bishop and a Certain Diocese in Egypt at the Turn of the Fourth and Fifth Centuries. The Testimony of the Canons of Athanasius, in: U Schyłku Starożytności: Studia Źródłoznawcze 17/18 (2018/2019) 91–115. There are two versions of the *Canons of Athanasius*, the Coptic and Arabic. The critical edition and English translation appear in Wilhelm Riedel – Walter E. Crum, The Canons of Athanasius of Alexandria. The Arabic and Coptic Versions, London 1904.

29 Canons of Athanasius, can. 34 (Arabic) (Riedel – Crum 32).

30 Ibid., can. 64 (Arabic and Coptic) (Riedel – Crum, Arabic: 42; Coptic: 101/129).

31 Cf. Mikhail, The Presentation of the Lamb, 58–62.

32 Cf. Abū al-Barakāt ibn Kabar, The Lamp of Darkness and the Elucidation of the Service, 17 (CATT 35 f.; Mikhail).

church.[33] A similar practice occurs in Syria.[34] Taken together, these sources seem to indicate that the bread of the Eucharist was at times baked in the church itself.

While the *Canons of Athanasius* may provide evidence that these ovens were linked to the production of the Eucharistic bread, the presence of an oven and hearth at the Large East Church at Kellis and 1 to 5 ovens at ʿAin el-Gedida – depending on how closely associated B14-15 were with the church complex – seems like a large number of hearths and ovens for the production of just Eucharistic bread, especially if only token bits of bread and wine were being distributed. So too do the remnants of a number of food storage containers at ʿAin el-Gedida. This multiplication of hearths and ovens in both spaces, and the presence of food storage containers, strongly suggests that these spaces were not just used for the preparation of token distributions of bread and wine within the Eucharistic celebration. The question then becomes what were these kitchens used for?

3 *A Spectrum of Practices and Interpretations: The Eucharist, the Eucharistic Meal, and the Emerging Agape Feast*

In order to begin to answer what these kitchens were used for, it is important to address the relationship between early Christian Eucharists and

33 For example, a bakery was attached to and accessible from the northern *pastophorion* at Deir al-Baramus, and seems to be dated to the seventh and eighth centuries when the second church was renovated, see Karel Innemée, Excavations at Deir Al-Baramus 2002–2005, in: Bulletin de La Société d'archéologie copte 44 (2005) 62. 65 f. This can also be seen in later churches and becomes a hallmark of Coptic and Syrian churches, see Emmanuel Fritsch, The Preparation of the Gifts and the Pre-Anaphora in the Ethiopian Liturgy in around A.D. 1100, in: Basilius J. Groen et al. (eds.), Rites and Rituals of the Christian East. Proceedings of the Fourth International Congress of the Society of Oriental Liturgy, Lebanon, 10–15 July 2012 (Eastern Christian Studies 22), Louvain 2014, 113–116. See also Grumett, Material Eucharist, Oxford 2016, 55–58.

34 Cf. Jean-Pierre Sodini, Archéologie des églises et organization spatiale de la liturgie, in: François Cassingena-Trévedy – Izabela Jurasz, Les liturgies syriaques (Études syriaques 3), Paris 2006, 242 f.; Grumett, Material Eucharist, 55–58.

communal meals in the first three to four centuries. A look at early Christian Eucharists and communal meals reveals a spectrum of practices and interpretations for the relationship between them, which shifted over time and was marked by regional differences.[35]

Most basically, at their origins all early Christian Eucharists were celebrated within the context of a communal meal, and these were influenced by Greco-Roman meal practices, in particular *symposia,* the meals of *collegia* (associations), and the morning *salutationes* (daily meetings in the morning between a patron and their clients where food or money were distributed). Christian Eucharistic practices were undoubtedly influenced by all of these different meal practices and none of these were mutually exclusive. In fact, the coexistence and even synthesis of these various practices likely explains the different meal practices – Eucharistic and non-Eucharistic – described throughout various fourth century sources. These meal practices also gave the Christian Eucharistic meal a ritual function, since these Greco-Roman meal practices all had a ritual or religious component.[36]

The earliest Eucharists were, as far as the extant evidence indicates, all celebrated within the context of a meal or otherwise flowed out of a meal as in the case of the morning *salutationes*. Despite emerging from a meal context, already by the second and third centuries early Christians began to focus on the bread and often wine (though water Eucharists were common into the fourth century) over and against the other foodstuffs at their Eucharistic meals.[37] This likely accounts for the reser-

35 This is already implied in the work of Andrew McGowan, Naming the Feast. The *Agape* and the Diversity of Early Christian Meals, in: Elizabeth A. Livingstone (ed.), Papers Presented to the Twelfth International Conference on Patristic Studies Held in Oxford, 1995. Biblica et apocrypha, ascetica, liturgica (StPatr 30), Leuven 1997, 314–318; id., Rethinking *Agape* and Eucharist in Early North African Christianity, in: StLi 34 (2004) 165–176; Stewart, Breaking Bread, esp. 153. 333. An older study worth still consulting is Wagner, Altchristliche Eucharistiefeiern.

36 Andrew McGowan, Ascetic Eucharists. Food and Drink in Early Christian Ritual Meals (Oxford Early Christian Studies), Oxford 1999, 33–88 and esp. p. 47; Hal Taussig, In the Beginning was the Meal. Social Experimentation and Early Christian Identity, Minneapolis 2009, esp. 32 f.

37 Cf. Bradshaw – Johnson, Eucharistic Liturgies, 44–50; Paul F. Bradshaw, Eucharistic Origins, Eugene/OR ²2023, 90–94. See also p. 234 f. below.

vation of the bread – and sometimes wine – for distribution to the sick in the time of Justin Martyr († 165) and its reservation in homes already by the time of Tertullian († 220).[38] In fact, Justin Martyr "provides the earliest evidence for a distribution of the eucharist *outside* the immediate celebration of the liturgy itself"[39]. Thus, a spectrum of what is the Eucharist and what is not the Eucharist – with a healthy ambiguity in between – emerged already at an early date (more below). However, one must be careful in discussing the separation of the bread and wine from the rest of the meal, as Paul Bradshaw has noted:

> There has been a widely held view among scholars that meal and eucharist, though still combined, were nevertheless clearly distinguished from one another at a very early point in Christianity's history, with meal following eucharist or eucharist following meal. […] There is no actual evidence at all that eucharist and meal were ever distinguished in this way in primitive Christianity. On the contrary, it seems to be a pure product of the minds of modern scholars who find it impossible to imagine that early Christians might have viewed the whole meal as sacred – as "the eucharist."[40]

At the same time, Alistair Stewart is likely correct when he observes that it is the elements of bread and (often) wine that were the key to distin-

See also the treatment of Justin Martyr, Ignatius of Antioch, Irenaeus of Lyon and Tertullian in Predrag Bukovec, Die frühchristliche Eucharistie, 189–230.

38 For a general overview, see William H. Freestone, The Sacrament Reserved. The Sacrament Reserved. A Survey of the Practice of Reserving the Eucharist, with Special Reference to the Communion of the Sick, during the First Twelve Centuries (ACC 21), London 1917, 40–50; Otto Nussbaum, Die Aufbewahrung der Eucharistie (Theophaneia 29), Bonn 1979, 266–284; Nathan Mitchell, Cult and Controversy. The Worship of the Eucharist Outside Mass, New York 1982, 10–43; Paul Bradshaw et al. The Apostolic Tradition. A Commentary (Hermeneia – A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible), Minneapolis 2002, 180 f.; Robert F. Taft, Reservation and Veneration of the Eucharist in the Orthodox Traditions, in: Bert Groen et al (eds.), Inquiries into Eastern Christian Worship (Eastern Christian Studies 12), Leuven 2012, 99–120; David Grumett, Material Eucharist, 235–240. For Justin Martyr, see apol. 1, 67 (PTS 38, 129 f.; Marcovich). For Tertullian, see uxor., 2,5 (CCSL 1, 389–390; Dekkers).

39 Mitchell, Cult and Controversy, 11.

40 Bradshaw, Eucharistic Origins, 68.

guishing Eucharistic meals from non-Eucharistic meals in this period. At least according to the narrative of 1 Cor. 11, Paul seems to advocate for "the reduction of the banquet to its essentials" – to "the acts of taking bread and wine and of eating and drinking"[41]. In other words, if "eating a meal might be distinguished from eating eucharistic foods" then there would be ways of talking about the celebration of the Eucharist within a meal context that would allow for the bread and wine to be seen from an early time as particularly significant within that larger meal context.[42] While in most/many communities the bread and wine would be important from an early date, a degree of sacredness, as Stewart points out, between the Eucharistic elements of bread and (often) wine and the meal context in which they were eaten, would allow for some communities to view other elements – if not the whole meal – as Eucharistic.[43] The meal itself, but also the gathering of the whole assembly, was still a key part of early Christians' understanding of the presence of Christ among them. This is especially clear in the writing of Ignatius of Antioch.[44]

Nevertheless, the increased focus on the Eucharistic food was becoming particularly strong by the time of Cyprian. As Andrew McGowan has argued, when Cyprian was writing "the understanding of the sacrality of the eucharistic food had developed to the point that it was the food itself more than the banquet that was the attraction"[45]. In *Ep*. 63,15–16 Cyprian suggests that the growth of the church at Carthage in the third century had a direct bearing on the ritual practices of the Christian community, contributing to the split of the morning Eucharistic celebration from the older evening banquet:

> Do some perhaps flatter themselves with the notion that, while in the morning water alone seems to be offered, yet when we come to dine we offer a mixed cup? But when we dine, we cannot call the people

41 Stewart, Breaking Bread, 176. 170 respectively. For a longer treatment of this, see ibid., 162–178. See also Bukovec's analysis of the New Testament texts: Bukovec, Die frühchristliche Eucharistie, 21–160.

42 Stewart, Breaking Bread, 152.

43 Cf. ibid., 234–238.

44 Cf. Fred Klawiter, Martyrdom, Sacrificial Libation, and the Eucharist of Ignatius of Antioch, Lanham 2022.

45 McGowan, Rethinking *Agape*, 176.

> together to our banquet, to celebrate the truth of the sacrament with all the brethren present. And it was not early but after dinner that the Lord offered a mixed cup. Should we then celebrate the Lord's sacrifice after supper, that so we offer a mixed cup with all present there? It was proper for Christ to offer at the evening of the day, so he might show in that sacrificial hour the sunset and the evening of the world […] We, however, celebrate the resurrection of the Lord in the morning.[46]

Even then, however, Cyprian stresses the importance of both the Eucharistic food and the gathering of the whole assembly. This leads to questions about the relationship in this period between the Eucharist, the Eucharistic meal, and another ritual that was beginning to emerge, namely the *agape*, a communal meal that often revolved around charity.

In discussing the current consensus on the relationship between the Eucharist and the *agape*, Stewart notes that

> Whereas the new consensus successfully criticizes the age-old understanding and chronology of separation, it neither gives an account of the eventual emergence of the eucharist as a distinct and sacred rite, taking place in the morning and consisting of the distribution of bread and wine in token amounts, nor does it give an account of the development of the agape; the existence of the agape in the fourth century is historically demonstrable, and so the institution must have had a beginning.[47]

[46] Cyprian, ep. 63,16,1–2: "An illa sibi aliquis contemplatione blanditur, quod etsi mane aqua sola offerri uidetur, tamen cum ad cenandum uenimus, mixtum calicem offerimus? Sed cum cenamus, ad conuiuium nostrum plebem conuocare non possumus, ut sacramenti ueritatem fraternitate omni praesente celebremus. At enim non mane, sed post cenam mixtum calicem optulit dominus. Numquid ergo dominicum post cenam celebrare debemus, ut sic mixtum calicem frequentandis dominicis offeramus? Christum offerre oportebat circa uesperam diei, ut hora ipsa sacrificii ostenderet occasum et uesperam mundi, sicut in Exodo scriptum est: et occident illum omne uulgus synagogae filiorum Israel ad uesperam. Et iterum in psalmis: adleuatio manuum mearum sacrificium uespertinum. Nos autem resurrectionem domini mane celebramus." (CCSL 3C, 412 f.; Diercks). Translation taken from McGowan, Rethinking *Agape*, 172 f. Cf. also Cyprian, ep. 63,15,1 (CCSL 3C, 411; Diercks).

[47] Stewart, Breaking Bread, 4.

In the course of his study, Stewart rightly points to the diversity of Eucharistic meals in the early church, some of which appear as the "normative" Eucharist we would expect, while others – like those celebrated for the martyrs, saints, and at the funerals of those who had recently died (see ch. 6) – likely represented different types of Eucharists that did not follow what would become the so-called "normal" pattern.[48]

Unfortunately, because of this, it remains difficult to identify what distinguishes a Eucharistic meal – especially in its diversity of forms – from any other gathering of Christians in the first three centuries. Even Stewart in his attempts to outline a beginning for the *agape* is not able to provide an explanation for what distinguishes an *agape* or other communal meals from the Eucharist in this period. He mounts evidence for a distinct *agape* meal in Ignatius, Tertullian, and *The Epistle to the Apostles*, to name a few, but most of the evidence is inconclusive or can be explained as Eucharistic.[49] Thus, here we must agree with Bradshaw's as-

48 See n. 3.

49 Most of Stewart's evidence accessed in his work *Breaking Bread* remains inconclusive, like the witnesses of Jude and Ignatius (Stewart, Breaking Bread, 68–72), or may suggest that the Eucharist was emerging as a distinct ritual that was nonetheless still celebrated in conjunction with a meal, as in *The Epistle to the Apostles*, the *Acts of John*, and the *Acts of Thomas* (ibid., 72–75 and 76 f). Support for the Eucharist and *agape* being the same event or at least celebrated together can be found in Bradshaw, Eucharistic Origins, 71. Stewart's strongest evidence for a distinction between the Eucharist and the *agape* comes from the fourth century (Stewart, Breaking Bread, 78–80. 92 f.). Thus, the pre-fourth century evidence is largely inconclusive and does not prove a distinction in the second century, as Stewart would like to argue. There are two possible exceptions. The first is Clement of Alexandria. Stewart suggests that Clement of Alexandria's discussion of *agape* celebrations outside of his community indicates that they were established by his time (ibid., 81–83). But Stewart is not able to describe the practice as non-Eucharistic, just that Clement does not like the term and also does not like the *agape* practices of some outside his community, see McGowan, Naming the Feast, 316–318; Bradshaw, Eucharistic Origins, 111. The other exception is Tertullian, who Stewart argues that nothing in the evening meal described by Tertullian is Eucharistic and that this should rather be seen as an *agape* (Stewart, Breaking Bread, 83–91). However, Stewart's argument largely rests on the fact that Tertullian does use his traditional Eucharistic language in describing the meal, but this might be the result of context and is, as Stewart even notes, an argument from silence. There is also nothing that would specifically point away from a Eucharistic context and toward this being an *agape*. Here we find Bradshaw's read of

sessment of Stewart's work: Stewart's position "that any references to an *agape* or even to an act of charity are intended to refer to a separate non-eucharistic meal that was widely practiced alongside the Eucharist in early Christianity […] requires him to stretch the evidence as far as he can to arrive at that conclusion rather than to acknowledge that all references are to a single eucharistic *agape*"[50]. Predrag Bukovec's monumental new study on the earliest Eucharistic celebrations seems to agree with this assessment:

> Es handelt sich bei der Agape zunächst nicht um ein zweites Mahl der frühen Christen, sondern um die eine Mahlversammlung, die hier aber aus dem Horizont der christlichen Geschwisterethik gesehen wird und die Liebe als theologisch schwangeres Konzept ekklesiologisch wie christologisch ausdifferenziert. "Agape" war ein Austauschbegriff für die Eucharistiefeier. Erst in [*Didascalia*] 9 und [*The Apostolic Tradition*] 26, also im 3. Jahrhundert, entsteht aufgrund der intensivierten Ritualisierung der Eucharistiefeier eine Leerstelle in der gemeindlichen *Mahl*-kultur, die offenbar sekundär gefüllt wurde durch ein gemeinsames Sättigungsmahl, das durch Segensgebete liturgisch aufgewertet wird.[51]

In the course of the third century, the increased sacrality of the Eucharistic food and greater food security, as well as the increasing size of many assemblies and the shift to a morning assembly, made the transition from a Eucharistic meal to a token distribution of bread and wine possible.[52] While some scholars have tried to place this shift as early as the New Testament, Bradshaw and Maxwell Johnson have noted that "[t]he transition from full meal to symbolic rite appears to have been gradual, taking

Tertullian as describing a Eucharist much more persuasive, see Bradshaw, Eucharistic Origins, 100–107. This is also supported by Bukovec, see Bukovec, Die frühchristliche Eucharistie, 412. Some of this evidence is also reprised in Stewart, Breaking Bread, 151–238. For a summary of the evidence which reaches the same conclusions as this paper, see McGowan, Naming the Feast. See also Bukovec, Die frühchristliche Eucharistie.

50 Bradshaw, Eucharistic Origins, 30.

51 Bukovec, Die frühchristliche Eucharistie, 469.

52 McGowan, *Rethinking Agape*, 176. See also Stewart, Breaking Bread, esp. ch. 1.

place before the middle of the second century in some places, after the middle of the third century in others"[53].

By the fourth century, a clearer distinction had emerged in most places between the Eucharist and other possible Christian meals. This was due, in large part, to the heightened sacrality of the food itself.[54] For example, we start to see the increasing use of transformation language – "may the bread and wine *become* (or "make" it – ποιέω) the body and blood of Christ"[55] – in the classical anaphoras. Writers, church inventories, and liturgical hoards from the fourth to sixth centuries also show that special vessels were increasingly set aside for liturgical use, particularly for the bread and wine.[56] While the material of these vessels varied from region to region and church to church, precious metals became common, even in village churches. All of this points to the importance of the elements themselves.

53 Bradshaw – Johnson, Eucharistic Liturgies, 58, see also ibid., 1–59. For an earlier study of this shift, see Mitchell, Cult and Controversy, 10–43. For the former position, see the dated, but still thought-provoking work, of Willi Marxsen in Willi Marxsen, The Lord's Supper as a Christological Problem, Philadelphia 1970.

54 Bradshaw – Johnson, Eucharistic Liturgies, 132–135.

55 Nathan Chase, From *Logos* to Spirit Revisited. The Development of the Epiclesis in Syria and Egypt, in: EO 39 (2022) 29–64.

56 Cf. Peter van Minnen, Inventory of Church Property, in: Francisca A. J. Hoogendijk – Peter van Minnen (eds.), Papyri, Ostraca, Parchments and Waxed Tablets in the Leiden Papyrological Institute (PLB 25), Leiden 1991, 40–77; Marlia Mundell Mango, Monetary Value of Silver Revetments and Objects Belonging to Churches, A.D. 300–700, in: Susan A. Boyd – Marlia Mundell Mango (eds.), Ecclesiastical Silver Plate in Sixth-Century Byzantium, Washington, D.C. 1992, 123–136; Kenneth S. Painter, The Water Newton Silver. Votive or Liturgical?, in: JBAA 152 (1999) 1–23; Béatrice Caseau, Objects in Churches. The Testimony of Inventories, in: Luke Lavan et al. (eds.), Objects in Context, Objects in Use. Material Spatiality in Late Antiquity (Late Antique Archaeology 5), Leiden 2007, 551–579. At the same time, non-metal liturgical vessels also continued to be used. See, for example, Vincent Michel, Furniture, Fixtures, and Fittings in Churches. Archaeological Evidence from Palestine (4th-8th c.) and the Role of the *Diakonikon*, in: Luke Lavan et al (eds.), Objects in Context, Objects in Use. Material Spatiality in Late Antiquity (Late Antique Archaeology 5), Leiden 2007, 581–606, here: 587.

Thus, evidence from the fourth century provides a *terminus ante quem* for the *distinction*[57] between the Eucharist and other Christian meals like the *agape*, but it does not provide a *terminus post quem*.[58] What is interesting, as we will see, is that the fourth century appears to be a concerted time when the Eucharist was still being separated from communal meals and even the emerging *agape*. In other words, while there was a clear distinction between the Eucharist and non-Eucharistic meals in most circles in this period, the fourth century was still a time of flux, and there are indications that the Eucharist was still celebrated at times with a meal – or within a meal context – rather than always being a token distribution of bread and (often) wine. Despite this, there is a tendency among historians to view the Eucharist from the fourth century onward as always a token distribution of bread and wine. But the lengths to which fourth century writers seek to distinguish the Eucharist from communal meals and *agapes*, as well as conform non-normative Eucharistic celebrations to the emerging normative pattern – i. e., the ritual practices celebrated at the tombs of the martyrs and in conjunction with the funerals of ordinary Christians – suggests that the "normative" Eucharistic celebration was still being established.

What this indicates is a spectrum of meal practices and interpretations of those practices that shifted over time and undoubtedly place, though there is not enough evidence to sketch regional differences (*Figure 8*). This spectrum of meal practices is not surprising. Catherine Bell has drawn attention to the way rituals are constructed by drawing a contrast between ritual and social practice. Her treatment of ritualization reveals that the contrast between social practices and ritual is always fundamentally rooted in similarity as well:

57 Note "distinction" here does not necessarily imply separation. Separation suggests that the *agape* emerged directly from the Eucharistic meals of earlier times. But I think Stewart has rightly cautioned scholars against always seeing the *agape* as a remnant of the meal portion of older Eucharistic celebrations that were meals.

58 Though as Stewart notes, this does not mean we should not use the categories of Eucharist and *agape* and abandon any attempt to classify early Christian meals along a continuum of diverse practices. Stewart, Breaking Bread, 148.

> [R]itual is a *way* of acting. As a way of acting, however, ritual is intrinsically concerned with distinguishing itself from other ways of acting. The ritualized activities gain a special status by this type of contrast. For example, distinctions between eating a regular meal and participating in the Christian eucharistic meal are drawn in numerous ways in nearly every aspect of the ritualized meal.[59]

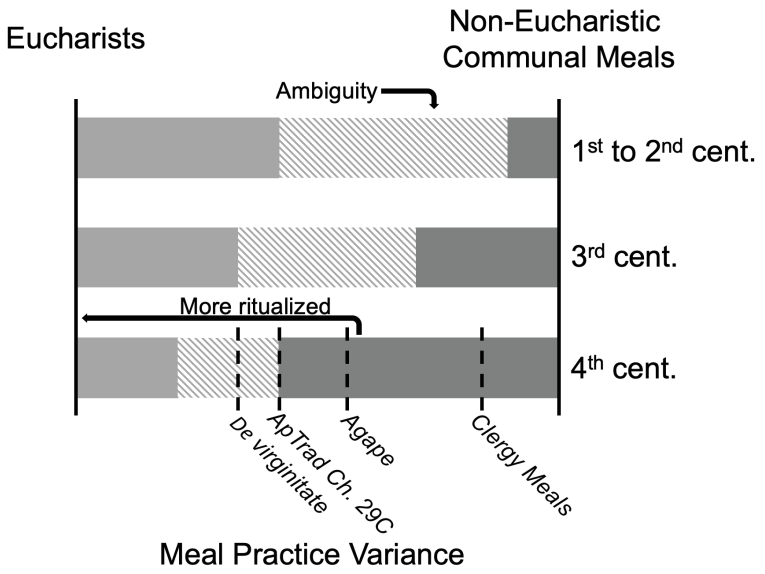

Figure 8: Spectrum of Meal Practices

What makes a regular meal and the Christian eucharistic/ritual meal contrastable, and the latter ultimately ritualizable, is not the contrast but the similarity between the meals, though this is perhaps harder to see in the modern period than the ancient world.[60] The Eucharist is a ritualization of broader socio-cultural meal practices. Over time, however, the Eucharist comes to be more and more distanced from the community's meal prac-

59 Catherine M. Bell, Ritual, Change, and Changing Rituals in: Worship 63/1 (1989) 31–41, here: 34.

60 Cf. Nathan P. Chase, Shaping the Classical Anaphoras of the Fourth through Sixth Centuries, in: Maxwell E. Johnson (ed.), Further Issues in Early Eucharistic Praying. Essays in Liturgical and Theological Analysis, Collegeville 2023, 23–60.

tices and meal practices in general. Kimberly Belcher has noted this phenomenon:

> As the Eucharist became recognized as central, it became more differentiated from ordinary eating and drinking; at the same time, the increasing differentiation put the Eucharist's role in interpreting the meaning of ordinary meals at risk. Eventually the "meal" meaning of the Eucharist became discursively separated from its ordinary practice.[61]

This differentiation is precisely what we see from the end of the third century and throughout the fourth.

Thus, in the earliest period, the spectrum of communal Christian meal practices that were non-Eucharistic appears to have been quite small. While there may have been some communal meals that were non-Eucharistic, these are simply not recorded. The meals that are recorded give the bread and (often) wine preeminence, while also giving the whole meal a Eucharistic connotation. The first real evidence to support a growing spectrum of practices for early Christian meals appears in the third century with Cyprian, who distinguishes between the evening supper and the morning celebration of the Eucharist. Yet, even for Cyprian, the original Eucharistic connotations of the evening supper were not forgotten. By the fourth century, the spectrum of meal practices had widened further and distinctions between the Eucharist and non-Eucharistic meal practices had become even sharper. In this period, fewer practices were identified with the Eucharist. Nevertheless, there remained some ambiguous practices, and there are even indications that the identification of which of the older meal practices were Eucharistic was still contested in this period.

By the fourth century we can place some of our evidence on the spectrum. Some meal practices like that described in *De virginitate*, as we will see, were likely ambiguously Eucharistic, both in antiquity and in our own modern understanding. Other practices, like those described in *The Apostolic Tradition* 29C, which will also be addressed below, were on the line being drawn between Eucharistic and non-Eucharistic meals. Others

[61] Kimberly H. Belcher, Ritual Systems, Ritualized Bodies, and the Laws of Liturgical Development, in: StLi 49 (2019) 89–110, here: 98.

lay firmly in the non-Eucharistic category. This included the *agape* meals, the meals of the clergy, and other practices. This does not, however, mean that these non-Eucharistic communal meals were non-ritualized. While the practices on the left were more ritualized than those on the right, all of these meals were still ritualized.

It is now worth turning to evidence from the fourth and fifth centuries, namely the church orders, Eucharistic reception and celebrations in domestic contexts, and *refrigeria*. This evidence will confirm the narrowing of Eucharistic practice in this period. It will also show the continued connection between the Eucharist and its original meal context as well as the contested nature of some older Eucharistic (meal) practices.

4 *The Evidence from the Early Church Orders*

Evidence for the continuation of the Eucharist within a meal context and the contested nature of what practices were Eucharistic can be seen in a number of church orders, particularly in the *Apostolic Tradition* (ApTrad), the *Canons of Hippolytus* (CH), and the *Apostolic Constitutions* (ApCons).

4.1 *The Apostolic Tradition (ApTrad)*

ApTrad is a church order that is dated in its final form by most scholars to the fourth century, but it likely preserves some practices that are as early as the second century. With regard to its provenance, it appears to be a collection of liturgical materials from different geographical locations.[62]

[62] For an English translation and a commentary on the text, see Bradshaw et al., Apostolic Tradition. For an alternative dating and provenance, see Alistair Stewart, On the Apostolic Tradition (SVPPS 54), Crestwood/NY ^{2}2015. For further discussion of dating and provenance, see Nathan P. Chase – Maxwell E. Johnson, The Apostolic Tradition. Its Origins, Development, and Liturgical Practices. With English Translations of the Version Contained in the Aksumite Collection (Ethiopic I) by Alessandro Bausi and the Arabic Version of the Clementine Octateuch (Arabic I) by Martin Lüstraeten, forthcoming: Collegeville 2025. This commentary argues for Egypt as the place of the document's final redaction. A new witness to ApTrad, which actually represents an older Ethiopic version, has recently been discovered and is referred to as Ethiopic I, see Alessandro Bausi, The "so-called *Traditio apostolica*". Preliminary observations on the new Ethiopic evidence, in: Heike Grieser – Andreas Merkt (eds.), Volksglaube

ApTrad contains a curious mixture of early Christian meal practices that were likely the result of a combination of a variety of Greco-Roman practices. In fact, it is possible to see the influence of *symposia, collegia* meals, and *salutationes* on particular practices described in the text, with some parts of ApTrad being influenced by multiple meal practices: *symposia* (chs. 5–6; 20:10; 21.28 and 33; 23; 28; 29A; 29C; 30A; 31–32); *collegia* meals (chs. 26–28; 29B; 30A; chs. 36–38); and *salutationes* (chs. 5–6; 22; 29B; 30A; 31-32; 36–38).[63] Many of the meals practices described in ApTrad were likely originally Eucharistic before they were de-Eucharistized in later redactions of the text.[64]

Perhaps the best example of this in ApTrad comes from ch. 29C, which gives a long description of the evening lamp lighting service and a communal supper that was undoubtedly shaped by a *symposium*-type meal and possibly the meals of *collegia*. This lamp lighting and meal is carried over into derivatives of the document like the CH canon 32 (dated between 336 and 340, Egypt)[65] and *Testamentum Domini* 2,11 (dated to

im antiken Christentum [FS Theofried Baumeister], Darmstadt 2009, 291–321; id., La "nuova" versione ethiopica della *Traditio apostolica*. Edizione e traduzione preliminare, in: Paola Buzi – Alberto Camplani (eds.), Christianity in Egypt. Literary Production and Intellectual Trends. Studies in Honor of Tito Orlandi (SEAug 125), Rome 2011, 21–69. The Ethiopic text in Bradshaw, Johnson, and Phillips is now known as Ethiopic II. The text of Ethiopic I in English translation will appear *in toto* in Chase – Johnson, The Apostolic Tradition, ch. 1.

63 Chase – Johnson, The Apostolic Tradition. For the reset of the critical editions of the other language versions, see Chase – Johnson, The Apostolic Tradition, Introduction.

64 Stewart has made a similar argument for ApTrad 26–30. See Stewart, Breaking Bread, 94–99.

65 Paul F. Bradshaw (ed.), The Canons of Hippolytus (Alcuin/Grow Liturgical Study 2), Bramcote 1987, 5–7. For a recent critical edition and translation, see Alistair Stewart, The Canons of Hippolytus. An English Version, with Introduction and Annotation and an Accompanying Arabic Text (Early Christian Studies 22), Macquarie Centre 2021, 3–6. I disagree, however, with Stewart's argument for an initial Cappadocian origin of the text, see Nathan P. Chase – Maxwell E. Johnson, The Origins of the Canons of Hippolytus, forthcoming: Collegeville 2024. René-Georges Coquin's critical edition of the Arabic should still be consulted, see René-Georges Coquin, Les Canons d'Hippolyte (PO 31/32), Paris 1966.

fifth century Syria, though circulated in Egypt at an early date),[66] though with some significant variations particularly in CH. In this chapter, ApTrad betrays signs of late development. A distinction is made between communal meals and what ApTrad considers to be the "actual" Eucharist. In this chapter, the communal meal is described as *not* being a Eucharist. Verse 16 in Ethiopic I, for example, says: "Let the faithful who are present at the supper receive from the hand of the bishop a little bread, before they divide their own bread, *for this is eulogy [e. g. blessed bread], not rendering of grace [e. g. thanksgiving]* like the body."[67] There are two scholarly inter-

66 The various recensions of TD and their relationship is rather complex and in need of much further study. There are three main witnesses to this church order: the Syriac, the Ethiopic, and the Arabic, as well as a number of fragmentary witnesses in Greek (the original language), Georgian, Coptic, and Latin. The Arabic is itself divided into four separate recensions: B, L, M, and D. For an overview of the sources, see Martin Lüstraeten, Edition und Übersetzung der Euchologie der Eucharistiefeier der Redaktion "M" des arabischen *Testamentum Domini* (I.23–I.28), in: ExF 2 (2023) 65–179, esp. 67–93; id., The Eucharistic Prayer in the Arabic Tradition of the Testamentum Domini, in: Chrysostom Nassis et al. (eds.), ΛΟΓΙΚΗ ΛΑΤΡΕΙΑ. Proceedings of the Eighth International Congress of the Society of Oriental Liturgy, Thessaloniki, Greece, 13–18 June 2022 (SECL 6), Münster 2024, 303–330. For its circulation in Egypt, see Alessandro Bausi, Testamentum Domini, in: Siegbert Uhlig – Alessandro Bausi (eds.), Encyclopaedia Aethiopica vol. 4, Wiesbaden 2010, 927 f., here: 928. For more on this, see also Emmanuel Fritsch, A Fresh Look at Certain Aspects of the Ge'ez Liturgical Edition of the Anaphora of the *Testamentum Domini* as the *Anaphora of Our Lord Jesus Christ*, in: Proceedings of the "First International Conference on Ethiopian Texts" May 27–30, 2013 St. Francis Friary, Asko, Addis Ababa 2016, 21–53. For questions of provenance, see also Michael Kohlbacher, Wessen Kirche ordnete das Testamentum Domini Nostri Jesu Christi? Anmerkungen zum historischen Kontext von CPG 1743, in: Martin Tamcke – Andreas Heinz (eds.), Zu Geschichte, Theologie, Liturgie und Gegenwartslage der syrischen Kirchen. Ausgewählte Vorträge des deutschen Syrologen-Symposiums vom 2.–4. Oktober 1998 in Hermannsburg (SOKG 9), Münster 2000, 55–137.

67 The Ethiopic terms used here are *ʾawlogiyā*, loanword from the Greek εὐλογία, "eulogy" [i. e., "blessed bread"], and *ʾakkʷatet*, "thanksgiving, rendering of grace" [i. e., thanksgiving]. Chase – Johnson, The Apostolic Tradition. Brackets in original. Ethiopic II: "And as those believers who are there are eating the supper, they are to take a little bread from the bishop's hand before they break their own bread, because it is a blessing and not the Eucharist like the body of our Lord." (AAWG 32, 76 f.; Duensing), English translation taken from Bradshaw et al., Apostolic Tradition, 156. Ethiopic II makes the Eucharistic connotations even clearer with the phrase "body

pretations of this passage. The first views this meal as once being Eucharistic, but that it is no longer viewed as Eucharistic by the community.[68] Stewart, however, suggests another interpretation of the italicized phrase. Rather than referring to the whole meal as non-Eucharistic, he argues that this clause refers just to the bread brought and broken by the believers, namely "their own bread". In other words, there is a distinction between the Eucharistic bread shared before the meal by the faithful and the non-Eucharistic bread ("their own bread") brought by the faithful.[69] Stewart's interpretation is an interesting one. In any event, both interpretations support the continuation of the celebration of the Eucharist within a meal context into the fourth century, though in the first interpretation the meal has recently been de-Eucharistized. Support for this can be seen in comparing this chapter to CH 32 (see below).

4.2 Canons of Hippolytus (CH)

CH canon 32, which is derived from ApTrad 29C and which calls this "[a supper] of the Lord", may indicate that the Eucharist was celebrated still directly within the context of a communal meal.[70] The text reads:

> If there is a meal [*walima*] or a supper [*ʿašia*] that somebody gives for the poor, it is *kyriakon* [in a church] {or: "it is [a supper] of the Lord}. The bishop should be present when a lamp is lit. The deacon lights it and the bishop prays over them and over those who invited them. It is right that he make the thanksgiving [*alāwkhrisdya*, a transliteration of *eucharistia*] at the beginning of the liturgy [*quddās*] so that they can be dismissed before it is dark, and recite psalms before their departure.[71]

of our Lord," though Reinhard Meßner has argued that this was likely also in Ethiopic I, see Reinhard Messner, Die angebliche *Traditio Apostolica*, in: ALw 58/59 (2016) 1–58, here: 38. Critical edition of Ethiopic I: SEAug 125, 50; Bausi.

68 Bradshaw et al., Apostolic Tradition, 158–160; Nathan P. Chase, Another Look at the "Daily Office" in the Apostolic Tradition, in: StLi 49 (2019) 5–25, here: 12 f.

69 Stewart, Breaking Bread, 190.

70 For the various ways of interpreting this passage, see ibid., 100–102.

71 Ibid., 101. Square brackets in Stewart. Curly brackets taken from Bradshaw, The Canons of Hippolytus, 32. For the difficulties of translating this

Stewart notes that this passage can be interpreted in two different ways, depending on how "the statement that the thanksgiving should be said first" is interpreted:

> There have been attempts to understand this as a statement that the meal is to begin with a eucharist since the word translated 'liturgy' above (*quddās*) is that generally employed in the Canons of Hippolytus for the eucharistic liturgy. Thus the phrase could mean either that he is to conduct the eucharistic liturgy at the beginning of the meal, or that he is to say certain words as a grace, which may possibly be the same words found at the opening of the eucharistic liturgy.[72]

Ultimately, Stewart concludes that "in this context it more probably refers to a grace before the meal; the canon is stating that the grace should use the same words as those used at the opening of the eucharistic liturgy"[73]. Given the complications with the textual transmission of this passage, it is also very possible that the translator has shifted the meaning of the text from the former interpretation to the latter.[74] As we will see, other evidence from Egypt provides some compelling reasons to see this as actually referring to a Eucharist celebration within a communal meal (see below). This would also be consistent with the way that Stewart interprets ApTrad

section of the canon, see Stewart, The Canons of Hippolytus, 139, n. 151 f. See also n. 74 and the critical edition PO 31/2, 402–405; Coquin.

72 Stewart, Breaking Bread, 102.

73 Ibid., 102. See also id., The Canons of Hippolytus, 139, n. 151.

74 One helpful reviewer pointed out that a closer read of the text following Coquin's edition would read: "It is right [for the bishop that he makes?] *for the poor* the thanksgiving [*ʾawḥārisdiyya*,] *which is* at the beginning of the liturgy [*quddās*] *and* [*wa* – not "so that"!] to dismiss them, so that they may segregate themselves before the darkness comes and so that they may make psalms before their departure." Translation by reviewer based on PO 31/2, 402-405; Coquin. This would only allow for an interpretation of the text in the latter way, namely, that "he is to say certain words as a grace, which may possibly be the same words found at the opening of the eucharistic liturgy". But this still is general enough that it is not clear if this would refer to a Eucharistic prayer or the dialogue and prayer like that of ApTrad 29 as Bradshaw presumes, see Bradshaw, The Canons of Hippolytus, 32. And there is nothing that says that originally ApTrad 29 was not considered a Eucharist (see above) and that the prayer given in that chapter was not a short Eucharistic prayer, or replaced another prayer when this chapter was shifted from a Eucharistic to non-Eucharistic celebration.

29C, from which this canon is, in part, derived. In his interpretation of ApC Trad 29C Stewart has argued that there was a distinction between the Eucharistic bread shared before the meal by the faithful and the non-Eucharistic bread at the meal.[75] Here though, the redactor of CH does not include the note that "this is not the Eucharist". This is either because it was clear to those who were using that text that it was not the Eucharist, or in fact it was still understood as Eucharistic. The latter case actually seems most reasonable, since CH tends to preserve the phraseology of ApTrad. Furthermore, according to Reinhard Meßner, the use of simply "supper" in ApTrad (Ethiopic I and II),[76] versus the use of "Lord's Supper" as in CH, is possibly the result of a mistake in Ethiopic I, which also likely read "supper of the Lord," but possibly a deliberate change in Ethiopic II to move away from this meal being viewed as a Eucharistic celebration.[77] This would seem to suggest that the reference to the meal in ApTrad 29C as "not [being] the Eucharist", along with the note in v. 6, is a recent change to the text.

4.3 The Apostolic Constitutions (ApCons)

Scholars have traditionally argued that ApCons was written between 375–380 in Syria, probably for a community in Antioch. There are real issues of dating and provenance that require further exploration of this church order.[78] In any event, there is only one reference to a communal meal in ApCons 2,28,1–5.[79] This chapter does not even describe the communal meal, but rather talks about the reservation of the firstfruits for the bishop and other ministers, all the way down to porter, and the respect the laity should give to the ministers. Little can be gleaned about the communal

75 Cf. Stewart, Breaking Bread, 190.

76 See n. 62.

77 Cf. Messner, Die angebliche *Traditio Apostolica*, 34, n. 119.

78 Cf. Michael Kohlbacher, Zum liturgischen Gebrauch der Apostolischen Konstitutionen in Ägypten, in: James M.S. Cowey – Bärbel Kramer (eds.), Paramone. Editionen und Aufsätze von Mitgliedern des Heidelberger Instituts für Papyrologie zwischen 1982 und 2004 (APF.B 16), München – Leipzig 2004, 296–312.

79 For the critical edition of ApCons, see Les constitutions apostoliques, 3 vols., ed. by Marcel Metzger (SChr 320. 329. 336), Paris 1985–1987.

meal except that there was still one in the community using ApCons. The rest of the chapter concerns the respect to be shown to the priesthood, the first part of which may have some distant echoes of ApTrad 28.

It is worth mentioning as well that ApCons 7,25,1–7 and 26,1–6 contains what most scholars would now argue is the vestiges of an older Eucharistic celebration of the community. These prayers were taken over from the prayers in *Didache* 9 and 10 but were expanded "to become more obviously eucharistic. The two prayers from chapter 9 were joined into one […] [and t]he prayer from chapter 10 became a post-Communion thanksgiving"[80]. Similarly, W. Jardine Grisbrooke notes that

> The prayers in VII, 25 and 26, which relate to the eucharist, are adapted, with considerable revision, from [the *Didache*] […] For what purpose? In the light of the liturgy of [ApCons] VIII it is most unlikely that they were intended for actual liturgical use; the probable motive for their inclusion is simply the preservation of traditional material […] in those mss. which have titles, the prayer in VII, 25 is styled "mystical thanksgiving."[81]

Moreover, while the prayers in ApCons 7 have "the appearance of an artificial construction", the "excessive prolixity" of the Eucharist prayers in ApCons 8,5,11–15,10 "seems to make it unlikely that it was ever the regular diet of any congregation but was intended instead more as a theological essay"[82]. Thus, the scholarly consensus is that ApCons 7 and 8 were not actually used liturgically. This would not be terribly surprising since the genre of the church orders as "living literature" means that while the document usually reflects in some way lived practice, it also is more aspi-

80 Paul F. Bradshaw – Maxwell E. Johnson, Prayers of the Eucharist. Early and Reformed, originally by Ronald C. D. Jasper – Geoffrey J. Cuming (ACC 94), Collegeville [4]2019, 50. For recent work on the composition and reception of these prayers, see Predrag Bukovec, Anmerkungen zur Filiation der Didache, in: Wolf B. Oerter – Zuzana Vítková (eds.), Coptica, Gnostica und Mandaica. Sprache, Literatur und Kunst als Medien interreligiöser Begegnung(en) (TU 185), Berlin – Boston 2020, 237–276; Bukovec, Die frühchristliche Eucharistie, 161–188.

81 W. Jardine Grisbrooke (ed.), The Liturgical Portions of the Apostolic Constitutions. A Text for Students (Alcuin/GROW Liturgical Study 13–14), Bramcote 1990, 18.

82 Bradshaw – Johnson, Prayers of the Eucharist, 50 f.

rational and fictitious.[83] In fact, Bradshaw and Johnson even assert that: "It seems highly improbable that a late-fourth century Christian community would actually have used both these two very different prayers."[84] But if both were not used simultaneously, and neither may have ever possibly been used liturgically, then what are we looking at?

It is clear that for the editor of ApCons the prayers in ch. 7 was no longer suitable for the Eucharistic celebration, since it did not conform to new conventions of Eucharistic praying seen in ApCons 8. Intriguingly though, ch. 7 is titled a "mystical thanksgiving" in some manuscripts. While ApCons 7 may have been included simply to preserve traditional material, it cannot be ruled out in this period that some of these more archaic prayers were used for non-normative Eucharistic celebrations. The use of "mystical thanksgiving" could point, for instance, to a non-normative Eucharistic context, like *refrigeria* (see ch. 6 below). In fact, we know from Canon 97 of the *Canons of Basil* (sixth century, Syria), that if the Eucharistic prayer was offered in: "a μαρτύριον […] and there is not a large congregation present, a small prayer known, which [the presider] knows by heart, is enough"[85]. This seems to be contrasted with the "catholic churches" and the use of the "high prayers" there. ApCons 7 may have fit this brief. In any event, ApCons 7 represents a middle stage between earlier Eucharistic prayers like that in the *Didache* and later classical

83 Paul F. Bradshaw, Liturgy and "Living Literature", in: id. – Bryan D. Spinks (eds.), Liturgy in Dialogue. Essays in Memory of Ronald Jasper, London 1993, 138–153.

84 Bradshaw – Johnson, Prayers of the Eucharist, 50.

85 Canons of Basil, can. 97 (Arabic), a text which is thought to be from Syria, but which circulated and was reformulated in sixth century Egypt. For the edition, see Wilhelm Riedel, Die Kirchenrechtsquellen des Patriarchats Alexandrien, Leipzig 1900, 274. For more on dating and provenance of the text, see Alberto Camplani – Federico Contardi, Remarks on the Textual Contribution of the Coptic Codices preserving the *Canons* of Saint Basil, with Edition of the Ordination Rite for the Bishop (*Canon* 46), in: Francesca P. Barone et al. (eds.), Philologie, herméneutique et histoire des textes entre Orient et Occident. Mélanges en hommage à Sever J. Voicu (IPM 73), Turnhout 2017, 139–159. The Sahidic version differs from the Arabic, which has been published by Riedel, Kirchenrechtsquellen, 278–283. For a summary of the differences, see Camplani – Contardi, Remarks, 145–147. In general, the Coptic provides the structure of the rite, but the Arabic is the better witness to the prayers.

anaphoras. Its inclusion in the collection alongside a Eucharistic prayer that appears to have never been used, suggests it may have still been in use in the context of a Eucharistic meal or other non-normative Eucharistic celebration, or that it had only recently been abandoned.

The evidence from the church orders points to an increased variety in Christian meal practices. Some of these, like in ApTrad 29C and CH canon 32 may still point to a Eucharistic – or ambiguously Eucharistic – celebration in the context of a meal. They also indicate that the practices that were considered Eucharistic were still contested by some. This seems to also be the case in ApCons 7 and 8.

5 *The Eucharist in Domestic Context(s)*

The continued reception of the Eucharist in domestic settings into the fourth and fifth centuries, as well as the continued celebration of the Eucharist in those same settings does not directly support the celebration of the Eucharist within a meal context. However, it does suggest a continued link between the Eucharist and other domestic meal practices. It also points, as we will see, to the contested nature of which practices were Eucharistic in this period.

5.1 *The Continuation of Eucharistic Reception in Domestic Spaces*

There is evidence for the continuation of the reception of the Eucharist in domestic settings into the fourth and fifth centuries.[86] A good example is

[86] For a larger discussion of the domestic and reception of communion, see Freestone, The Sacrament Reserved, 40–50; Nussbaum, Aufbewahrung der Eucharistie, 266–284; Mitchell, Cult and Controversy, 10–43; Daniel Callam, The Frequency of Mass in the Latin Church ca 400, in: TS 45/4 (1984) 613–650; Robert F. Taft, The Frequency of the Celebration of the Eucharist Throughout History, in: Maxwell Johnson (ed.), Between Memory and Hope. Readings on the Liturgical Year, Collegeville 2000, 77–96; Nathan Mitchell, The History of Eucharistic Reservation in the West I, in: Worship 85 (2011) 155–166; id., The History of Eucharistic Reservation in the West II, in: Worship 85 (2011) 257–268; Taft, Reservation and Veneration; Stefanos Alexopoulos, The Presanctified Liturgy in the Byzantine Rite. A Comparative Analysis of Its Origins, Evolution, and Structural Components (LiCo 21), Leuven 2009, 8–34. For the logistics, especially in the

ApTrad 36, which mentions a fast before receiving the Eucharist; "every faithful [person to] take care to receive the Eucharist before he tastes anything else"[87]. This chapter is likely addressing daily or frequent reception of the Eucharist outside of the full eucharistic celebration and specifically within a domestic setting.[88] It is possible that a similar practice undergirds ch. 37 as well, which is clearly concerned about unbelievers and mice (!) receiving the Eucharist. These chapters give tantalizing clues about the distribution and reception of communion in a domestic setting, something that continued beyond the fourth century in some locations before ecclesial authorities sought to limit the practice. This is supported both by canonical legislation and material evidence, like pyxides.[89]

Another example of a home communion, or possibly even Eucharistic meal, is the ritual practice of a female ascetic described by Pseudo-Athanasius in the fourth/fifth century treatise *De virginitate*.[90] In that text, Teresa Berger observes that the female ascetic "is to 'eucharistize' (εὐχαριστήσασα) the bread on her table" with a blessing and "is then instructed to sit down at table and to break the bread. After making the sign of the cross over the bread three times, she is to 'eucharistize'

New Testament period, see, for example, Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, St. Paul's Corinth. Text and Archaeology, Collegeville ³2002; Konrad Vössing, Das "Herrenmahl" und 1 Cor. 11 im Kontext antiker Gemeinschaftsmähler, in: JAC 54 (2011) 41–72. For a critique of these approaches and a summary of scholarship on early Christian Eucharistic spaces, see Nathan P. Chase, Developments in Early Eucharistic Praying in Light of Changes in Early Christian Meeting Spaces, in: JECS 32 (2024) 367–402.

87 Chase, Another Look, 14. 17 f.

88 Cf. Bradshaw et al., Apostolic Tradition, 180 f.

89 Cf. Stefanos Alexopoulos, When Art, Canon Law and Liturgy Meet. The Case of the Liturgical Pyxides, in Basilius J. Groen et al. (eds.), Rites and Rituals of the Christian East. Proceedings of the Fourth International Congress of the Society of Oriental Liturgy, Lebanon, 10–15 July 2012 (Eastern Christian Studies 22), Louvain 2014, 377–385.

90 Cf. Teresa Berger, Gender Differences and the Making of Liturgical History. Lifting a Veil on Liturgy's Past (Liturgy, Worship, and Society), London – New York 2016, 88 f. For issues with translations of this text, see Berger, Gender Differences, 88, n. 68 and 89, n. 72. For the Greek text, see Ps.-Athanasius, virg. 13 (TU 14/2a, 47; von der Goltz). See also the analysis in Bukovec, Anmerkungen zur Filiation, 252–255.

(εὐχαριστοῦσα) the bread"[91]. This is all done within the context of a meal. The accompanying prayers parallel prayers used within a eucharistic context in other early liturgical sources. It is unclear what is exactly being described here, as Berger notes:

> Given these characteristics of the text in question, what kind of "Eucharist" is envisioned here? The meal probably is best understood as a home communion of ascetic women, that is, women who both eucharistize the bread on their table every day, and also attend public worship, presumably a Sunday eucharistic liturgy. How these women thought of the relationship between the two Eucharists we will in all likelihood never know.[92]

What it shows at the very least is a close link between meals in a domestic setting and the Eucharist, possibly into the fifth century. In fact, Stewart argues that "it is entirely plausible that the practice described here […] has derived and survived from a context in which the eucharist had been celebrated in the context of a *Sättigungsmahl*, and indeed celebrated by one of these women"[93].

While not directly supporting the continuation of a Eucharist meal, the close association between domestic meal practices and the Eucharist indicates a still permeable boundary between the two into the fourth and fifth centuries and the contested nature of which meal practices were considered Eucharistic. *De virginitate* also adds in a meal context, directly or indirectly connecting meal, domestic setting, and Eucharist. This suggests that the relationship between the three lasted longer than is traditionally imagined.

5.2 *The Continuation of Eucharistic Celebrations in Domestic Contexts*

While the previously discussed evidence connects meal practices in domestic contexts with the Eucharist, there is also evidence for the continuation of the celebration of the Eucharist in domestic spaces like house

91 English translation taken from Berger, Gender Differences., 88 f.

92 Ibid., 92.

93 Stewart, Breaking Bread, 116.

churches, homes, and villa chapels in this period as well. While the celebration of the Eucharist in a domestic setting or converted domestic space (e. g. a house church) does not necessarily indicate the endurance of a Eucharistic meal, it does suggest older paradigms for the celebration of the Eucharist that may imply a stronger connection between the Eucharistic celebration and non-Eucharistic meals in this period. It could even point to the continuation of a Eucharistic celebration in the context of a meal. But more significantly, as we will see, it points to the contested nature of which practices were Eucharistic in this period.

Evidence for the continuation of Eucharistic celebrations in homes in the fourth and fifth centuries appears throughout the ancient Christian world,[94] particularly in Rome[95] and Constantinople,[96] but also in Britain,[97] Hispania,[98] Gaul,[99] Switzerland,[100] North Africa,[101] North Italy,[102] and Dalmatia,[103] as well as Laodicea, Gangra, East Syria and Egypt as we will see below. In Rome, for instance, Paul Bradshaw notes that at the turn of the fourth century the *Passio SS. Dativi, Saturnini presb. et aliorum* "lists the names of the members of an African house-church arrested during the Diocletian persecution in February 304, totalling less than fifty persons"[104]. A number of fourth and fifth century writers even describe the practice in

94 Cf. Kimberly D. Bowes, Private Worship, Public Values, and Religious Change in Late Antiquity, Cambridge 2011, see especially the examples given throughout p. 130–158.

95 Cf. ibid. *passim*.

96 Cf. ibid.

97 Cf. ibid., 131–133. 135. 158 f. 174–179.

98 Cf. ibid., 133–135. 137 f., 142–146, and 179–187.

99 Cf. ibid., 141. 149 f. 179. 180 f.

100 Cf. ibid., 141. 173.

101 Cf. ibid., 127. 146. 150–152. 162–169. 187.

102 Cf. ibid., 147–150. 170–74.

103 Cf. ibid., 141 f.

104 Paul Bradshaw, The Fourth Century. A Golden Age for Liturgy?, in: Wolfram Kinzig et al. (eds.), Liturgie und Ritual in der alten Kirche. Patristische Beiträge zum Studium der gottesdienstlichen Quellen der alten Kirche (Studien der Patristischen Arbeitsgemeinschaft 11), Leuven 2011, 99–118, here: 104, n. 17.

their writings: Basil († 379),[105] Gregory Nazianzus († c. 389),[106] Ambrose of Milan († 397),[107] Patriarch Nestorius (428–431),[108] and Melany the Younger († 439).[109] Robert Taft has termed these celebrations "'domestic' Eucharists"[110].

These "domestic" Eucharists represent a type of non-normative Eucharist, since the shift away from the use of domestic and non-domestic multi-use spaces for Christian worship to purpose-built worship spaces was long underway by the start of the fourth century.[111] As Egyptian archeologist Peter Grossmann has noted, Eusebius in *Ecclesiastical History* 8,1,5 indicates "that during the peaceful decades between the reign of Gallienus (253–268) and the Great Persecution of Diocletian (from 303) smaller churches were replaced by 'completely new and spacious churches'", which may have been modeled on the multi-aisled basilica form.[112] Despite this, the archeological evidence supports the continued conversion of houses into churches into the fourth century. Possible examples from Egypt include the small East church at Kellis[113] and the small church

105 Cf. Basil, ep. 199 (Courtonne II, 155).

106 Cf. Gregory Nazianzus, or. 8, 18 (SChr 405, 284–287; Calvet-Sebasti); id., or. 18,29 (PG 35, 1020 f.).

107 Cf. Paulinus, Vita Ambrosii 10 (PL 14, 30; Paulinus of Milan, Vita di Sant'Ambrogio, ed. by M. Pellegrino, Rome 1961, 64/65).

108 Cf. Jean Hardouin, Acta conciliorum et epistolæ decretales, ac constitutiones summorum pontificum, vol. 1, Paris 1715, 1322.

109 Cf. Richard Raabe, Petrus der Iberer. Ein Charakterbild zur Kirchen und Sittengeschichte, Leipzig 1895 [reprint: Syriac Studies Library 234, Piscataway 2012], 36.

110 Taft, Frequency, 79.

111 For a summary of scholarship, see Chase, Developments in Early Eucharistic Praying.

112 Peter Grossmann, Early Christian Architecture in Egypt and Its Relationship to the Architecture of the Byzantine World, in: Roger Bagnall (ed.), Egypt in the Byzantine World, 300–700, Cambridge 2007, 103–136, here: 113. Grossmann cites Eusebius, HE 7,6, but it appears that he meant ibid., 8,1,5 (SChr 55, 4; Bardy).

113 Cf. Bowen, The Fourth-Century Churches; id., The Small East Church at Ismant El-Kharab; Aravecchia, 'Ain El-Gedida, 9–11. 200–205.

at Munisis,[114] as well as the church at Kysis[115] and maybe the churches at ʿAin el-Gedida[116] and the West I house at Narmuthis.[117] There are also examples outside of Egypt as well. There is, for instance, a converted house church from the fourth century in Lullingston (England).[118] While different in form, the villa chapels studied by Gillian Bowes should also be considered examples of domestically oriented Eucharistic spaces.[119]

The continuation of Eucharistic celebrations in domestic spaces into the fourth and fifth centuries was for a variety of reasons: 1) due to resistance to imperially regulated Christianity; 2) as places for heretical *and* Nicene groups to gather when they did not have access to publicly controlled churches; and 3) as the Church spread into rural locations.[120] The role of house-churches in expressing dissent from the officially sanctioned liturgy meant that heresy and worship in homes were often closely

114 Cf. Charles Bonnet, L'église du village de Douch, in: Michel Reddé et al. (eds.), Kysis. Fouilles de l'Ifao à Douch, Oasis de Kharga, 1985–1990 (Douch 3 / DFIFAO 42), Cairo 2004, 84; Victor Ghica, Pour une histoire du christianisme dans le désert occidental d'Égypte, in: JS 2 (2012) 189–280, here: 216 f.; Aravecchia, ʿAin El-Gedida, 206 f. Ghica has argued against seeing it as a converted house, see Ghica, Pour une histoire, 217, n. 155.

115 Cf. Bonnet, L'église du village de Douch; Ghica, Pour une histoire, 213–215; Aravecchia, ʿAin El-Gedida, 205–208.

116 Cf. Nicola Aravecchia, The Church Complex of ʿAin El-Gedida, Dakhleh Oasis, in: Roger S. Bagnall et al. (eds.), The Oasis Papers 6: Proceedings of the Sixth International Conference of the Dakhleh Oasis Project (Dakhleh Oasis Project. Monograph 15), Oxford 2012, 391–408; Aravecchia, ʿAin El-Gedida, 9–11. 200–208. 81–142. 187-210.

117 Cf. Edda Bresciani, Rapporto preliminare delle campagne di Scavo 1968 e 1969 (TDSA 53), Milan 1976, 25.

118 See Edward Adams, The Earliest Christian Meeting Places. Almost Exclusively Houses? (LNTS 450), London 2016, 110–11; Jenn Cianca, Sacred Ritual, Profane Space. The Roman House as Early Christian Meeting Place (Studies in Christianity and Judaism Series 1), Montreal et al. 2018, 104–110.

119 See nn. 94–103.

120 Cf. Harry Maier, Heresy, Households, and the Disciplining of Diversity, in: Virginia Burrus (ed.), Late Ancient Christianity (A People's History of Christianity 2), Minneapolis 2005, 213–233; Reinhard Messner, Die Synode von Seleukeia-Ktesiphon 410 und die Geschichte der ostsyrischen Messe, in: id. – Rudolf Pranz (eds.), Haec sacrosancta synodus. Konzils- und kirchengeschichtliche Beiträge, Regensburg 2006, 59–85; Bowes, Private Worship.

connected in the thinking of church and state officials.[121] Worship in private houses also reveals the complex relationship between bishops and the elite in this period, with patronage disputes often coloring their relationship.[122] But likely there were other more practical reasons for the continuation of Eucharistic celebrations in domestic spaces, especially in poorer and smaller Christian communities. These reasons largely account for the non-normative status of the Eucharists celebrated within them.

Regardless of the reasons, Taft notes that by the late fourth century "things got out of hand" with these domestic Eucharists, and so the so-called Synod of Laodicea (363/64)[123] and the Synod of Seleucia-Ctesiphon (410)[124] "proscribe the practice outright, and the Second Council of Carthage (c. 390) [canon 9] requires episcopal authorization for it"[125]. Canon 58 of the Synod of Laodicea, for instance, prohibits Eucharistic celebrations in houses, which seems to be an attempt to rein in the house churches and domestic (non-normative) Eucharists that were still prevalent:

121 Maier, Heresy, Households, and the Disciplining of Diversity; Bowes, Private Worship, esp. 101–103. 190–202. 212–214. 218.

122 Cf. Bowes, Private Worship, 62 f. 78–83. 101 f. 116–120. 161–187. 218–20. This may also be behind the banning of meals in churches, see Stewart, Breaking Bread, 79. Tensions in patronage between bishops and laity may also be seen in early sources like Ignatius of Antioch (cf. ibid., 68–72) and the *Didascalia* (cf. ibid., 104 f.). It may explain later church orders too, like ApTrad, see Charles A. Bobertz, The Role of Patron in the *Cena Dominica* of Hippolytus' *Apostolic Tradition*, in: JThS 44 (1993) 170–184. His study dates this to second century Rome. However, as noted in n. 62, both the dating and provenance have been disputed by Bradshaw et al., Apostolic Tradition.

123 Cf. Discipline générale antique (II^{e}–IX^{e} s.), vol. 1/2: Les canons des synodes particuliers, ed. by Périclès-Pierre Joannou (Pontificia Commissione per la Redazione del Codice di Diritto Canonico Orientale. Fonti 9), Rome 1962, 130–155.

124 There is a new critical edition and translation of this synod, see The General Councils of the Church of the East, ed. by Alberto Melloni – Ephrem A. Ishac (COGD 5/2), Turnhout 2023, 523–603. This synod is also referred to as the Council of Mar Isaac. See the introduction by Melloni and Ishac on the complicated transmission of this synod.

125 Taft, Frequency, 79.

"That in houses offerings are not to be done by bishops or presbyters."[126] Similar canons appear in the Council of Gangra (traditionally dated between 341–355 CE, but most recently 358) canon 6,[127] the Second Council of Carthage canon 9,[128] and, as we will see below, the Synod of Seleucia-Ctesiphon (410). This likely also explains the prohibitions about clergy not coming to church in the council of Zaragoza (379/380) canons 2 and 4,[129] and the First Council of Toledo (c. 400) canon 5.[130] Nevertheless, evidence

126 Synod of Laodicea, can. 58: "Περὶ τοῦ μὴ δεῖν προσφέρειν ἐν οἰκίαις. Ὅτι οὐ δεῖ ἐν τοῖς οἴκοις προσφορᾶς γίνεσθαι παρὰ ἐπισκόπων ἢ πρεσβυτέρων." (Joannou 1/2, 153).

127 Council of Gangra, can. 6: "Εἴ τις παρὰ τὴν ἐκκλησίαν ἰδίᾳ ἐκκλησιάζοι, καταφονῶν τῆς ἐκκλησίας, καὶ τὰ τῆς ἐκκλησίας ἐθέλοι πράττειν, μὴ συνόντος τοῦ πρεσβυτέρου κατὰ γνώμην τοῦ ἐπισκόπου, ἀνάθεμα ἔστω." / "Si quis extra ecclesiam seorsum conventus celebrat, et dispiciens ecclesiam ea quae sunt ecclesiae voluerit agere, non conveniente presbytero secundum episcopi iussionem, anathema sit." (Joannou 1/2, 91 f.). Cf. Bowes, Private Worship, 193 f. For the dating, see Marta Przyszychowska, The Date of the Council of Gangra Reconsidered (358), in: JECS 30 (2022) 223–243.

128 Cf. Concilium Carthaginense a. 390, can. 9: "Vt si praesbyter inconsvlto episcopo agendam celebraverit, honore privetvr. Numidius episcopus Maxulitanus dixit: In quibusdam locis sunt presbyteri qui, aut ignorantes simpliciter aut dissimulantes audaciter, praesente et inconsulto episcopo, cum plurimis in domiciliis agant agendam, quod disciplinae et in congruum esse cognoscit sanctitas uestra. Geneclius episcopus dixit: Fratres et coepiscopi nostri dignae suggestioni tuae relpondere non morentur. Ab uniuersis episcopis dictum est: Quisquis presbyter inconsulto episcopo agendam in quolibet loco uoluerit celebrare, ipse honori suo contrarius existit." (CCSL 149, 16 f.; Munier).

129 Cf. Concilivm Caesaravgustanvm, can. 2: "Ut diebus Dominicis nullus ieiunet nec diebus quadragesimae ab ecclesia absentet. Item legit: Ne quis ieiunet die Dominica causa temporis aut persuasionis aut supprestitionis; aut de quadragesimarum die ab ecclesiis non desint nec habitant latibula cubiculorum ac montium qui in his suspicionibus perseverant, sed exemplum et praeceptum custodiant sacerdotum, et ad alienas villas agendorum conuentuum causa non convenient…anathema sit […]"; can. 4: "Ut tribus hebdomadis quae sunt ante epiphania, ab ecclesia nemo recedat. Item legit: Viginti et uno die quo a sextodecimo Kalendas Ianuarias usque in diem epiphaniae, qui est octauo Idus Ianuarias, continuis diebus nulli liceat de ecclesia absentare nec latere in domibus nec sedere ad villam nec montes petere nec nudis pedibus incedere, sed concurrere ad ecclesiam […] anathema erit." (MHS.C 4, 293–295; Martínez Diez – Rodríguez). Cf. Bowes, Private Worship, 185. 192.

130 Cf. Concilivm Toletanvm I, can. 5: "Presbyter vel diaconus vel subdiaconus vel quilibet ecclesiae deputatus clericus, si intra civitatem fuerit vel

for the continuation of the celebration of the Eucharist in domestic settings – often under the control of the owners of the houses – remained quite popular across the ancient Christian world beyond the fifth century.[131]

Evidence from the East Syrian tradition suggests that the celebration of the Eucharist within the context of a meal, particularly within domestic contexts, lasted even longer there, namely into the fifth century.[132] Canon 13 of the Synod of Seleucia-Ctesiphon prohibits domestic Eucharistic celebrations: "[…] holy *Qurbana* shall be offered upon one altar in all the churches, and the practice of ancient memory shall no longer exist among us. The *Qurbana* shall no longer be offered from house to house"[133]. This mirrors an earlier canon from the Synod of Laodicea (canon 58). But it is not just the prohibitions against domestic eucharistic celebrations in the Synod of Seleucia-Ctesiphon that suggest the continuation of Eucharistic meals in fifth-century East Syria. Rather, Reinhard Meßner has argued that the liturgy of the word was slow to be adopted into regular eucharistic practice in East Syria, something that is again likely indicated in canon 13 which seeks to imitate the service in the West:

> Also, the western liturgy which Isaac and Marutha the bishops taught us and all of us saw celebrated here in the church of Seleucia, henceforth we shall celebrate together in the same manner. The deacons in every city shall proclaim the litany like this, and the Scriptures shall be read thus, and the pure and holy *Qurbana* shall be offered upon one

in loco in quo ecclesia est aut castelli aut vicus aut villae, ad ecclesiam ad sacrificium cotidianum non venerit, clericus non habeatur si castigates per satisfactionem veniam ab episcopo nolverit promereri." (MHS.C 4, 330; Martínez Diez – Rodríguez). Cf. Bowes, Private Worship, 157. 192.

131 For the continuation of these practices after the fifth/sixth century, see Bowes, Private Worship, 222–226; Taft, Frequency, 79–80.

132 Cf. Messner, Die Synode von Seleukeia-Ktesiphon 410, esp. 84 f.

133 Synod of Seleucia-Ctesiphon, can. 13 (COGD 5/1, 584/585.; Melloni – Ishac). The Syriac text of the first part of the canon can be found in the footnote below. See also Messner, Die Synode von Seleukeia-Ktesiphon, 410. 84 f., here: 84. "Und die Angelegenheit dieses alten Gedenkens soll von nun an nicht mehr unter uns geschehen: in den Häusern soll das Opfer nicht mehr dargebracht werden."

altar in all the churches, and the practice of ancient memory shall no longer exist among us.[134]

This likely points to the continuation in this period of older meal practices linked to a *symposium*-style Eucharistic celebration. These would not conform to what was becoming the normative Eucharistic celebration.

In Egypt, Athanasius in his *Apologia contra arionos* 11, 12, 28, and 78 argues against those who celebrate the Eucharist in private homes and against those who allow the catechumens to be present for the Eucharist.[135] This latter practice would seem to mark a recent departure from the older norm.

Like the reception of the Eucharist in a domestic setting, which linked the Eucharist with domestic meal practices, the celebration of the Eucharist also within domestic spaces continued the connection between these spaces, domestic meals, and the Eucharist. Texts like *De virginitate* suggest a very strong link between them, whereas other texts like ApTrad 36 and 37 are more suggestive. Similarly, the continuation of Eucharistic celebrations within domestic settings seems, according to conciliar legislation, to suggest that these were non-normative Eucharist celebrations. The Synod of Seleucia-Ctesiphon, in particular, seems to suggest the continuation of older *symposium*-style Eucharistic celebrations into the fifth century. All of this points to the contested nature of which practices were Eucharistic and, thus, what was the normative Eucharistic celebration in this period.

134 Ibid., can. 13: ܘܐܦ ܠܬܫܡܫܬܐ ܡܕܒܚܝܬܐ ܕܐܢܫܘܣ ܘܡܕܪܘܬܐ ܐܦܝܣܩܘܦܐ ܐܠܨܘ ܠܢ: ܘܗܪܟܐ ܟܠ ܒܥܕܬܐ ܕܦܠܛܘ ܚܕ ܐܝܟܢ ܕܡܫܬܡܫܝܢ: ܡܟܝܠ ܘܠܗܠ ܐܦ ܚܕ ܫܡܫܐܝܬ: ܗܟܢܐ ܡܫܡܫܝܢ ܚܢܢ. ܘܫܡܫܐ ܒܟܠ ܡܕܝܢܬܐ ܒܪܘܪܘܬܐ ܐܝܟ ܗܕܐ ܢܒܪܘܢ. ܘܡܠܬܟܐ ܗܟܢܬ ܬܗܘܐ. ܘܡܘܪܒܐ ܕܒܝܬܐ ܘܡܕܒܚܐ: ܟܠ ܚܕ ܡܕܒܚܐ ܒܟܠܗܝܢ ܥܕܬܐ ܢܬܗܘܐ. ܘܥܗܕܢܐ ܕܗܘ ܕܩܕܡܝܐ ܥܬܝܩܐ ܕܗܘܐ ܡܟܝܠ ܒܝܢܬ: ܠܐ ܢܗܘܐ: ܘܟܢܫܬ ܩܠܝܬܐ ܕܗܘܐ ܡܘܪܒܐ: ܠܐ ܬܬܗܘܐ (COGD 5/1, 584/585; Melloni – Ishac). See also Oscar Braun, Das Buch der Synhados. Nach einer Handschrift des Museo Borgiano übersetzt und erläutert, Stuttgart – Vienna 1900 [reprint: Amsterdam 1975], 21. A special thanks to Alex C. J. Neroth van Vogelpoel for checking my transcription. All errors remain mine.

135 Athanasius, apol. II, 11. 12. 28. 78 (Athanasius Werke 2/1, 96 f. 107 f. 158 f.; Opitz).

6 *Refrigeria*

The last possible evidence for the continuation of a Eucharistic meal into the fourth and fifth centuries appears in conjunction with the practice of celebrating funerary meals, commemorations, and memorial meals for the deceased.[136] These again point to a spectrum of practices and interpretations for Christian meals and the contested nature of which practices were Eucharistic. Early Christian funerary practices were rooted in older Greco-Roman observances for the dead. These Greco-Roman practices included ritual meals at the time of burial (*silicernium*), the ninth day after the funeral (*cena novendialis*), as well as on memorials of the anniversary of the death of the deceased (*dies natalis*), and during the festival of the ancestors (*parentalia*). These meals celebrated at graves or tombs are known generally as *refrigeria*. When carried over into Christian practice, they frequently became celebrations of the Eucharist. We see this already in the *Didascalia* 26, which calls for the celebration of the Eucharist as part of the funeral liturgy, often at the gravesite:

> [B]ut you, in accordance with the Gospel and in accordance with the power of the Holy Spirit, gather in the cemeteries to read the Holy Scriptures and to offer your prayers and your rites to God without observance and offer an acceptable eucharist, the likeness of the royal body of Christ, both in your congregations and in your cemeteries and on the departure of those who sleep.[137]

136 Cf. Jon Davies, Death, Burial, and Rebirth in the Religions of Antiquity (Religion in the First Christian Centuries), London 1999, 199; Ann M. Yasin, Funerary Monuments and Collective Identity. From Roman Family to Christian Community, in: ArtB 87 (2005) 433–457, here: 447–451; Robin Jensen, Dining with the Dead. From the *Mensa* to the Altar in Christian Late Antiquity, in: Laurie Brink – Deborah Green (eds.), Commemorating the Dead. Texts and Artifacts in Context. Studies of Roman, Jewish and Christian Burials, New York 2008, 107–143; J. Patout Burns – Robin Margaret Jensen (eds.), Christianity in Roman Africa. The Development of Its Practices and Beliefs, Grand Rapids 2014, 126–128. 493 f. 499. 505–508. 512 f; Andrea Riedl et al. (eds.), Das Gebet für die Verstorbenen. Zugänge aus Theologie und Praxis, Münster 2025.

137 Didasc. 26. The English translation is taken from The Didascalia Apostolorum. An English Version, ed., introd. and annotated by Alistair Stewart-Sykes (StTT 1) Turnhout 2009, 255 f.

This would be furthered, in the case of the martyrs, by the construction of shrines and *martyria* over their graves, which began to appear by the second quarter of the fourth century.[138] Christians would gather at these shrines for pilgrimages and commemorations, and they would celebrate the Eucharist in them. Moreover, the archaeological evidence supports the continuation of *refrigeria* beyond the fourth century.[139] In Egypt, for instance, there is ample evidence of *stibadia,* or the semi-circular banquet beds, on which these *refrigeria* were celebrated.[140]

However, it cannot be assumed that *refrigeria* were the same everywhere, or that they were always Eucharistic. As Candida Moss notes:

> any theory of the relationship between funerary meals held in honor of martyrs and any other form of ancient meal must take into account chronological development, sectarian differences, and geographical variety not only in the practice of Eucharistic meals, but also in the performance of funerary meals in general. The issue is not just one of Christian diversity, but also of Roman diversity of practice.[141]

138 Cf. Peter Grossmann, Churches and Meeting Halls in Necropoleis and Crypts in Intramural Churches, in: Elisabeth R. O'Connell (ed.), Egypt in the First Millennium AD. Perspectives from New Fieldwork (British Museum Publications on Egypt and Sudan 2), Leuven 2014, 93–113, here: 93.

139 Cf. Jensen, Dining with the Dead, 126–128.

140 Semi-circular banquet beds (or *stibadia*) are also attested in late antique funerary contexts, for example in building 180 (in the past interpreted as a church) at the Christian cemetery of El-Bagawat in Kharga Oasis and in the courtyard of mausoleum 18 (dated to the second half of the fifth century) at the same site, see respectively Guiseppina Cipriano, El-Bagawat. Un cimitero paleocristiano nell'Alto Egitto (Ricerche di archeologia e antichità cristiane 3), Todi 2008, 74–83. 68 f., fig. 38 respectively. See also Ulrich Volp, Tod und Ritual in den christlichen Gemeinden der Antike (SVigChr 65), Leiden 2002; Karel Innemée, The Lord's Table, *Refrigerium*, Eucharist, *Agapè*, and Tables for Ritual Meals in al-Bagawat and in Monasteries, in: Gawdat Gabrat – Hany N. Takla (eds.), Christianity and Monasticism in Alexandria and the Egyptian Deserts (Christianity and Monasticism Series), Cairo – New York 2020, 281–296.

141 Candida Moss, Christian Funerary Banquets and Martyr Cults, in: David Hellholm – Dieter Sänger (eds.), The Eucharist. Its Origins and Contexts. Sacred Meal, Communal Meal, Table Fellowship in Late Antiquity, Early Judaism, and Early Christianity, vol. 2 (WUNT 376), Tübingen 2017, 819–828, here: 822.

At the same time, Moss is willing to entertain that frequently these *refrigeria* were "quasi-eucharistic (if not Eucharistic) meals"[142]. In those cases, it is likely better to call them non-normative Eucharists.

Nevertheless, the celebration of *refrigeria* by Christians was not without controversy among fourth-century authorities. As Karel Innemée notes:

> By the end of the fourth century the celebration of the *dies natalis* […] of the martyrs could apparently turn into festivities that were considered inappropriate, and as a reaction bishops gradually tried to forbid these or replace them with liturgical celebrations.[143]

In other words, in the fourth century there was an attempt to convert these meals – whether they were viewed as non-normative Eucharists or as non-Eucharistic meals – into normative Eucharists. The same was the case with the funerary meals of ordinary Christians, many of which were non-normative Eucharists. However, by the fourth century these too were being made normative Eucharistic celebrations[144] or *agapes*.[145] Many Christian *refrigeria* likely lay on a spectrum from non-Eucharistic to Eucharistic celebrations with a number being non-normative Eucharistic celebrations. However, the continuation of *refrigeria* into the fourth and fifth centuries likely provides further evidence for the endurance of Eucharistic celebrations within the context of a meal in the same period. It also attests to the contested nature of what practices constitute a Eucharistic celebration in this period.

142 Ibid., 826.

143 Innemée, The Lord's Table, 285. For more, see Jensen, Dining with the Dead, 132–143; Stewart, Breaking Bread, 125–135. See also Arietta Papaconstantinou, Le culte des saints en Égypte des Byzantins aux Abbassides. L'apport des papyrus et des inscriptions grecs et coptes, Paris 2001, 318–322.

144 Cf. Stewart, Breaking Bread, 135–140. 143–147.

145 Cf. ibid., 140 f. 145–147.

7 Returning to the Kitchens at ʿAin el-Gedida and Kellis

In light of this evidence from the fourth and fifth centuries, which has revealed the contested nature of Eucharistic practices still in this period, it is worth returning to the question that prompted this study, namely: what were the kitchens at ʿAin el-Gedida and Kellis used for? Other questions follow directly on this, including: Were these food preparation spaces used in conjunction with the ritual spaces? If so, how might these relate to Eucharistic and non-Eucharistic meals that could have been celebrated in these spaces? Furthermore, how might the archeological evidence supplement our understanding of the ritual (and non-ritual) distribution of bread and other foodstuffs within the early Christian community? There is no doubting that the kitchens – with their ovens, stoves, and storage spaces – would have been used for the preparation of the token distributions of bread and wine for the Eucharistic celebration when a token distribution appears in the late third and early fourth century, as indicated in the literary record (see p. 230–232). The fact that Eucharistic practice was still contested in this period, however, offers a wider range of options for the use of these spaces than traditional scholarship would perhaps allow. A few possible additional uses for these kitchens reveal themselves that can help answer these questions:

- The production and distribution of food doles;
- The preparation of non-Eucharistic meals for the clergy and community;
- Celebrations of the Eucharist within a meal context.

Moreover, none of these uses are mutually exclusive. It is to these possible uses that we now turn.

7.1 Production and Distribution of Food Doles

It is possible that these spaces were linked to the production and distribution of bread doles and other food stuffs for the clergy, the poor, and widows within the local community. From its inception, the church served as a primary food distributor for these groups within the Christian community and this distribution was directly connected to the Eucharistic celebration. Christians would bring offerings to the Eucharist that would be dis-

tributed to these groups after the Eucharistic celebration. In some ways, the church's support of these groups this appears to be modeled off of secular distributions to select citizens. The first fruits, in particular, appear to have been stored in the church complex before their distribution to the faithful (see below).

In Rome and some other cities, staple foods like grain and eventually olive oil and wine were distributed by the state as part of the civilian and military *annona*.[146] This practice, which was largely confined to the city of Rome and its citizens, has its origins in the second century BCE, but was gradually expanded in the first three centuries CE. This *annona* was given to citizens, but the poor likely received these disbursements through patronage networks. This meant that while "most of the disbursements indeed ended up in the hands of the poor, a share of the handouts was also allotted to persons who, given their financial situation, had no need for them"[147]. Similar models appeared to have operated in other cities, like third-century Alexandria,[148] and even provincial cities, especially in times of crisis. Texts from Oxyrhynchus in the 270s CE, for instance, indicate the distribution of grain to "three thousand citizens of Oxyrhynchus, which constituted most likely no more than a tenth of the inhabitants (total inhabitants, that is, not citizens, who constituted a privileged, much less numerous circle)"[149]. But like with the *annona* for Rome, the distribution in Oxyrhynchus was done "on account of their political status, not material poverty"[150].

The situation changed in the third century as greater food security meant that the food from the Eucharistic celebration was no longer needed for the daily sustenance of many members of the Christian communi-

146 For an overview of the *annona*, see Paul James, Food Provisions for Ancient Rome. A Supply Chain Approach (Studies in Roman Space and Urbanism), London 2021, 6–8.

147 Ewa Wipszycka, The Alexandrian Church. People and Institutions (JJP.S 25), Warsaw 2015, 178 f.

148 Cf. ibid., 180 f.

149 Cf. ibid., 179.

150 Cf. ibid.

ty.[151] This would have facilitated the shift to a token distribution of bread and wine at the Eucharistic celebration. By the fourth century the situation had changed further. Widows, the sick, the poor, and even clergy were still dependent on the material aid of the Christian community, as evidenced by the church orders and other sources.[152] However, Constantine also gave the Church an allowance which included a distribution of grain and bread to clergy as well as widows and virgins.[153] Despite this, the material

151 Cf. McGowan, Firstfruits, 85. We can see connections between the support of the poor and other groups and the Eucharistic celebration in several of Ignatius of Antioch's writings (even if this may be shifting toward charitable meals), see Stewart, Breaking Bread, 71, and Clement of Alexandria (cf. ibid., 81–83), as well as later sources, see n. 152. For a good example from Ignatius of Antioch, see Ignatius, smyrn. 7–8 (SChr 10bis, 160–163; Camelot). For Clement of Alexandria, see paed. 2,1 (SChr 108, 10–45, Mondésert – Marrou).

152 One of the first sources is the *Didascalia* 2,27,3–4, 2,28,1–2, 2,36,4, and 2,57,6, which link the Eucharist and meals to the support of the poor, widows, and clergy. English translation in StTT 1, 151 f. 158 f. 175; Stewart-Sykes). The *Apostolic Church Order* links the Eucharist and the poor, as well as clergy, see Stewart, Breaking Bread, 107 f. ApTrad 29B and 30A (for editions and translations, see n. 62) also addresses the material support of the widows, sick and the poor and were likely at one point Eucharist, see below and Stewart, Breaking Bread, 94–99. This also appears in CH canons 32, 34, and 35 (for editions and translations, see n. 66), which again may have also been, or at one point were, Eucharistic, see Stewart, Breaking Bread, 100–102. The *Gnomai* of the Council of Niceae (mid-fourth century, Egypt) at ch. 15,7 link the giving of the first fruits and offerings to the Eucharist, which in the larger context of ch. 15 seems to suggest outreach to the poor and those in need (Texts from Christian Late Antiquity 35, 83; Stewart). In the fourth/fifth-century *Canons of Athanasius* from Egypt, the first fruits and offerings given to the clergy within the context of the Eucharist (Arabic and Coptic canon 63, see Riedel – Crum, Arabic 42; Coptic 100/129), are distributed to the clergy and for church use, as well as being distributed to the poor, widows, and sick by the bishop or his steward (Arabic canons: 3, 14–16, 61, 65, 69, and 82; Coptic canons: 47, 61, 62, 65, and 87; Riedel – Crum, Arabic: 8. 25–28, 40 f. 42. 44. 50; Coptic: 90 f./120 f. 97–100/126–129. 100 f./129, 101–103/129–131, and 111/137 f. respectively). ApCons 2,25 and 28 (SChr 320, 226–235. 244–249; Metzger) also links the firstfruits to the Eucharist, as well as distributions to the poor and clergy; however, see also ApCons 8,31,1–3 (SChr 336, 234/235; Metzger), which restricts leftovers from the offerings to the clergy.

153 Cf. Wipszycka, Alexandrian Church, 171–194. See also Daniel Caner, Towards a Miraculous Economy. Christian Gifts and Material "Blessings" in Late Antiquity, in: JECS 14 (2006) 329–377.

aid of the clergy was still largely based, it seems, on the offerings brought to the church in conjunction with the Eucharistic liturgy.[154] In fact, the support of these groups within the Christian community was the primary reason why offerings were brought by the faithful to the Eucharistic celebration.[155] Logistically, these offerings had to be stored in the church before they were distributed. Thus, the church had to accommodate the storage of bread, wine, and other foodstuffs used for ritual and non-ritual reasons, including the distribution of foodstuffs to the clergy, the sick, the poor, and widows. This may explain some of the imprints of vessels seen at ʿAin el-Gedida in B6 and features indicative of food storage containers in the upper room of B10.[156]

While bread was often the central foodstuff distributed, we are dealing in these spaces with not only ovens but also full kitchens. This suggests that what was stored and produced in these spaces was more than just bread. It is possible that these kitchens were used for the production of other foodstuffs that were included in the doles given to these groups. This can be seen, for instance, in the treatment of the goods given to widows in ApTrad 30A – "giving them food and wine", not just bread. But it is also possible that these kitchens were used for cooking meals consumed within the church complex. It is to this possibility that we now turn.

7.2 Preparation of Non-Eucharistic Meals for the Clergy and Community

The fact that these complexes contain not just ovens but full kitchens suggests that even if these were used for the production and distribution of food doles, they likely were also used for the preparation of some sort of communal meal that was served in the church complex. The hearths and large food storage spaces, especially at ʿAin el-Gedida, strongly imply that meals were cooked within them. This seems all the more likely given

154 Cf. Wipszycka, Alexandrian Church, 202. See also ead., Les ressources et les activités économiques des églises en Égypte du IVe au VIIIe siècle, Brussels 1972, 64–92; Caner, Towards a Miraculous Economy.

155 Cf. Wipszycka, Les ressources, 64–92. See also below.

156 For a limited treatment of the storage of the offerings destined for the Eucharistic celebration, see Mikhail, The Presentation of the Lamb, 53–123.

the pervasiveness of ovens in domestic settings, suggesting that there was not a need for communal ovens in these church spaces.[157] That this meal would have been eaten in the church itself seems probable given that the kitchen in the Large East Church at Kellis and one of the kitchens at ʿAin el-Gedida (B6) were closely associated with the church.

Literary sources from Egypt provide evidence that these kitchens were used to prepare a communal meal. Texts from Kellis talk about the celebration of an "agape" meal among Christians and Manichaeans in the city.[158] *P.Kellis IV Gr. 96* – also known as the "Kellis Agricultural Account Book", or KAB – a record of the transactions of what was likely a Christian estate and dated to the 360s or 370s. Included among the expenditures is the "agape"[159]. Another text (*P. Kell. Copt. 47*) from the Manichaean community lists in association with *agape* the following foodstuffs: "oil, olives, grapes, lupin seeds and lentils". Donations for the *agape* can be seen throughout the papyri at Kellis.[160]

Beyond the local sources from Kellis, there is the evidence of the communal meals in Egypt described in CH 32, a text which (as noted above) largely repeats ApTrad 29C. The *Canons of Athanasius* also discuss a communal meal of the clergy that at least in the Arabic version of canons 66–67 is said to occur in the church.[161] As Ewa Wipszycka notes, in Egypt "offerings were handed over to deacons to be carried in a procession of gifts in the church and then divided up, primarily among the clergy. A part of foodstuffs was consumed immediately, during a meal held in the church complex, and whatever remained the clergy took home with them."[162] Theophilus of Alexandria († 412) also notes a meal after the Eucharist to receive left-over offerings:

157 See the studies in n. 19. For the sharing of communal ovens, see in particular Depraetere, A Comparative Study.

158 Cf. Anthony Alcock, The Agape, in: VigChr 54 (2000) 208f.

159 Cf. Roger S. Bagnall, The Kellis Agricultural Account Book. P. Kell. IV Gr. 96 (Dakhleh Oasis Project. Monograph 7), Oxford 1997, 82 f.

160 Cf. Håkon F. Teigen, A Manichaean Church at Kellis (NHMS 100), Leiden 2021, 236–238. 239–242; Mattias Brand, Religion and the Everyday Life of Manichaeans in Kellis. Beyond Light and Darkness (NHMS 102), Leiden 2022, 166–196.

161 Cf. Riedel – Crum, The Canons of Athanasius of Alexandria, 43.

162 Wipszycka, Alexandrian Church, 202. See also ead., Les ressources, 64–92.

> The remainder of what has been offered for the sacrifice, when what is needed for the Mysteries has been consumed, is to be shared out by the clergy. But not even catechumens should eat and drink of these, only clerics and the faithful brethren with them.[163]

This is largely repeated in the *Canons of Athanasius* canon 63.[164] Canons 32, 33, 49, and 50 of the *Canons of Athanasius* also seem to describe the celebration of a meal after the Eucharistic celebration, but it seems that these meals are only for the clergy.[165] It is likely, however, that the *Canons of Athanasius* are describing multiple types of meals held in the church complex – some only for clergy and some which included all the faithful. A later prayer for this meal may be in *Stud.Pal. XVIII 288*.[166] As an aside, it should also be noted that in the Roman tradition a meal of the clergy after Easter vespers is preserved, likely a vestige of older practices that were more common throughout the year,[167] and in the Roman and Hispano-Mozarabic traditions there was a practice of blessing the meat of the lambs at the end of the Easter Mass.[168]

163 Theophilus of Alexandria, Ὑπομνηστικὸν, 8: "Περὶ τοῦ μὴ κατηχούμενον γεύεσθαι τῶν εἰς θυσίαν προσφερομένων εὐλογιῶν. Τὰ προσφερόμενα εἰς λόγον θυσίας, μετὰ τὰ ἀναλισκόμενα εἰς τὴν τῶν μυστηρίων χρείαν, οἱ κληρικοὶ διανεμέσθωσαν, καὶ μήτε κατηχούμενος ἐκ τούτων ἐσθιέτω ἢ πινέτω, ἀλλὰ μᾶλλον οἱ κληρικοὶ καὶ οἱ σὺν αὐτοῖς πιστοὶ ἀδελφοί." (Joannou 2, 269). English translation taken from Norman Russell, Theophilus of Alexandria (The Early Church Fathers), London 2007, 87.

164 Canons of Athanasius, can. 63 (Riedel – Crum, Arabic: 42; Coptic: 100/129).

165 Cf. ibid., can. 32 (Arabic). 33 (Arabic). 49 (Arabic and Coptic). 50 (Arabic and Coptic) (Riedel – Crum, canon 32, Arabic: 32; canon 33, Arabic: 32 f.; canons 49–50 Arabic: 36; Coptic: 92 f./122 f). For more, see Wipszycka, Alexandrian Church, 401–403; ead., A Certain Bishop, 102 f.

166 Cf. Mihálykó, The Christian Liturgical Papyri, no. 319.

167 Cf. OR 27,78–79 and 30B,82 (SSL 24, 366. 477; Andrieu) respectively. This is repeated in the *Pontificale Romano-Germanicum* along with the blessing prayers for the lamb, meat, and milk and honey in PRG 408–412 (StT 227, 115–117; Vogel – Elze). Stewart also notes that in OR 1,99 (SSL 24, 99; Andrieu), it is noted that "invitations to dinner should be passed out during the *Agnus Dei*". Stewart, Breaking Bread, 233.

168 For the Roman material, see PRG 408 (StT 227, 115 f.; Vogel – Elze). The *Benedictio Agni* in the episcopal *Liber Ordinum* [book for occasional services] *Madrid, Real Academia de la Historia, Ms Aemil. 56*, dated to the late tenth or early eleventh century, appears to be a vestige of more or less the same practice seen in the Roman sources. For the critical editions of these

Conciliar legislation, however, would come to target these celebrations. The Synod of Laodicea in canon 28, for instance, prohibited the setting up of couches in churches, a practice rooted in a Greco-Roman dining context:[169] "It is not acceptable in the houses of worship or in the churches to hold so-called *agape* services and to eat in the house of God and to set up dining sofas."[170] A similar canon appears from the Synod of Hippo (393 CE) canon 29:

> Neither bishops nor clergy shall dine in the church, except when necessary for the hospitality shown to travelers, but then the people shall be prohibited from this kind of banquet as much as possible.[171]

The evidence for the prohibition of dining sofas and communal meals in the Synods of Laodicea and Hippo seems to point to the continuation of communal meals that were either understood by some to be Eucharistic or which ecclesial authorities worried were being understood as Eucharistic meals.[172] Likely in keeping with this conciliar legislation outside of Egypt, evidence from Egypt indicates that separate rooms outside of the sanctuary and nave would begin to be set up for these meals.[173] This may explain the creation of the wall separating B5 and A46 in ʿAin el-Gedida (see ch. 2.1 ↗). All of this was likely an attempt to standardize and normalize Eucharistic practice. Secular authorities even would become in-

texts, see Liber ordinvm episcopal (Cod. Silos, Arch. monástico, 4), ed. by José Janini (StSil 15), Santo Domingo de Silos 1991, 353 f. Interestingly, the blessing of a wax lamb appears in OR 26 (SSL 24, 326 f.; Andrieu).

169 Cf. Messner, Die Synode von Seleukeia-Ktesiphon 410, 85.

170 Synod of Laodicea, can. 28: "Περὶ τοῦ μὴ δεῖν ἐν ἐκκλησίαις ἀριστοποιεῖν. Ὅτι οὐ δεῖ ἐν τοῖς κυριακοῖς ἢ ἐν ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις τὰς λεγομένας ἀγάπας ποιεῖν, καὶ ἔνδον ἐν τῷ οἴκῳ ἐσθίειν καὶ ἀκκούβιτα στρωννύειν." (Joannou 1/2, 142).

171 Breviarium Hipponense, can. 29: "Vt nulli episcopi uel clerici in ecclesia conuiuentur, nisi forte transeuntes hospitiorum necessitate illic reficiant; populi etiam ab huiusmodi conuiuiis, quantum potest fieri, prohibeantur." (CCSL 149, 41; Munier). Translation from Jensen, Dining with the Dead, 141.

172 This is more or less also the opinion of Stewart, Breaking Bread, 79.

173 See the *Canons of Basil* canon 96 (Arabic); Riedel, Die Kirchenrechtsquellen, 272 f.

volved, prohibiting eating in churches.[174] This also corresponds to a limiting of the firstfruits offered on the altar in African legislation and in ApCons 8,47,3.[175]

7.3 Celebrations of the Eucharist within a Meal Context

While there was a close connection between the Eucharistic celebration and the communal meals described above, that connection was mostly limited to: 1) the use of the offerings from the Eucharistic celebration for the food for the communal meals, and 2) the use of the church space for both types of events. But other sources suggest that the Eucharist could still have been celebrated in a meal context a closer link. ApTrad 29C, for instance, either indicates a recent shift away from a Eucharistic meal, or the celebration of the Eucharist in the context of a meal. This is affirmed in the Egyptian context by the CH canon 32, which may provide even stronger evidence for the continuation of the celebration of the Eucharist within the context of a communal meal.[176] In fact, while Stewart concludes that it is unlikely that the meal described in the text began with the Eucharist, the other evidence noted above from Egypt provides some compelling reasons to interpret the text in precisely that way.

A link between the Eucharist and a satiating meal into the fourth and fifth centuries was debated by Klaus Gamber and Heinzgerd Brakmann based mainly on statements by Socrates of Constantinople, Sozomen, and Shenoute of Atripe. Gamber advocated for a link between the two into the fourth and fifth centuries and Brakmann argued against that interpretation.[177] Both thought these writers provided the best evidence

174 See, for instance, the fifth century Codex Theodosianus 9,45,4 (The Corpus of Roman Law [Corpus Juris Romani] 1, 265; Pharr).

175 For more, see Stewart, Breaking Bread, 240. For the Breviarium Hipponense, see can. 23 (CCSL 149, 39 f.; Munier).

176 See ch. 4.2.

177 For a summary, see Heinzgerd Brakmann, Der Berliner Papyrus 13918 und das griechische Euchologion-Fragment von Deir el-Bala'izah, in: OS 36 (1987) 31–38, here: 37, n. 44. For the relevant works by Klaus Gamber, see Klaus Gamber, Das Eucharistiegebet im Papyrus von Dêir-Balizeh und die Samstag-abend-Agapen in Ägypten, in: OS 7 (1958) 48–65; id., Liturgie übermorgen. Gedanken über die Geschichte und Zukunft des Gottesdienstes, Freiburg i. Br. et al. 1966, 75–91; id., Der liturgische Papyrus von Deir

for each of their positions. As we have seen, there are many other reasons to support the link between the meal and Eucharist into the fourth century in Egypt beyond these sources, but it is worth looking at these sources in more detail.

The fifth century church historian Socrates of Constantinople will be taken up first, since Sozomen repeats Socrates' account:

> The Egyptians in the neighbourhood of Alexandria, and the inhabitants of Thebaïs, hold their religious assemblies on the sabbath, but do not participate of the mysteries in the manner usual among Christians in general: for after having eaten and satisfied themselves with food of all kinds, in the evening making their offerings, they partake of the mysteries.[178]

While the order is reversed (meal then Eucharist) Socrates seems to support the idea that the Eucharist was still occurring in the evening, and this alone, based on his account, may place it within a meal context or at least it could be a vestige of the practice.

A near identical description (likely derived from Socrates' account) is provided by Sozomen in his *Ecclesiastical History*: "There are several cities and villages in Egypt where, contrary to the usage established elsewhere, the people meet together on Sabbath evenings, and, although they have dined previously, partake of the mysteries."[179] Brakmann notes that

el-Bala'izah in Oberägypten (6./7. Jh.), in: Le Muséon 82 (1969) 61–83; ID., Sacrificium laudis. Zur Geschichte des frühchristlichen Eucharistiegebets (SPLi 5), Regensburg 1973, esp. 22; ID., Sacrificum vespertinum. Lucernarium und eucharistisches Opfer am Abend und ihre Abhängigkeit von den Riten der Juden (SPLi 12), Regensburg 1983, 34–67. For the relevant works by Brakmann, see Heinzgerd Brakmann, Die angeblichen eucharistischen Mahlzeiten des 4. und 5. Jh.s, in: RQ 65 (1970) 82–97; ID., Zur Geschichte der eucharistischen Nüchternheit in Ägypten, in: Le Muséon 84 (1971) 197–211; ID., Der Berliner Papyrus.

178 Socrates, hist. eccl. 5,22.43–44: "Αἰγύπτιοι δὲ γείτονες ὄντες Ἀλεξανδρέων καὶ οἱ τὴν Θηβαΐδα οἰκοῦντες ἐν σαββάτῳ μὲν ποιοῦνται συνάξεις, οὐχ ὡς ἔθος δὲ Χριστιανοῖς τῶν μυστηρίων μεταλαμβάνουσι. Μετὰ γὰρ τὸ εὐωχηθῆναι καὶ παντοίων ἐδεσμάτων ἐμφορηθῆναι περὶ ἑσπέραν προσφέροντες τῶν μυστηρίων μεταλαμβάνουσιν." (SChr 505, 228/229; Maraval), translation taken from NPNF2 2,132; Zenos.

179 Sozomen, hist. eccl. 7,19,8: "Οὐ μὴν ἀλλὰ καὶ τοῦ ἐκκλησιάζειν οὐχ ὁ αὐτὸς παρὰ πᾶσι καιρὸς ἢ τρόπος. Ἀμέλει οἱ μὲν καὶ τῷ σαββάτῳ ὁμοίως τῇ μιᾷ

both of these writers are trying to accentuate that the Egyptians, in contrast to those even in the city of Alexandria, partake of the Eucharist on Saturday evening and do so without fasting.[180]

Shenoute, alongside some Pachomian sources, indicate that the Eucharist was celebrated on Saturday evening and Sunday morning, a pattern that is not that dissimilar to earlier practices of celebrating the Eucharist on Saturday evenings.[181] Shenoute, however, is very clear that there is a distinct difference between regular food and the Eucharist throughout his writings. But this seems to point to the fact that there was confusion among the faithful, as even he admits, possibly due to the practices of heretical groups like the Melitians and Origenists and their influence.[182] Or, perhaps, it was because the difference between the communal meal and the Eucharist was still solidifying. In *Now Many Words and Things I Said*,[183] for instance, Shenoute references a complaint by a governor that those in Egypt eat before going to the Eucharist, and while Shenoute notes that this practice was not done in his community, he defends the practice, especially for those who have to work. This has nothing to do with a communal meal, but rather the need for those who work to eat throughout the day.[184] Brakmann reads Socrates and Sozomen through this same lens, arguing that the issue is really about fasting, and he notes that in time an obligatory fast before the Eucharist would become common, even in Egypt.[185]

> σαββάτου ἐκκλησιάζουσιν, ὡς ἐν Κωνσταντινουπόλει καὶ σχεδόν πανταχῇ, ἐν Ῥώμῃ δὲ καὶ Ἀλεξανδρείᾳ οὐκέτι. παρὰ δὲ Αἰγυπτίοις ἐν πολλαῖς πόλεσι καὶ κώμαις παρὰ τὸ κοινῇ πᾶσι νενομισμένον πρὸς ἑσπέραν τῷ σαββάτῳ συνιόντες, ἠριστηκότες ἤδη, μυστηρίων μετέχουσι." (SChr 516, 172/173; Festugière), translation taken from NPNF2 2, 390; Hartranft.

180 Cf. Brakmann, Zur Geschichte, 203 f.

181 Cf. ibid., 206 f.

182 Cf. Hugo Lundhaug, Shenoute's Eucharistic Theology in Context, in: David Hellholm – Dieter Sänger (eds.), The Eucharist. Its Origins and Contexts. Sacred Meal, Communal Meal, Table Fellowship in Late Antiquity, Early Judaism, and Early Christianity, vol. 2 (WUNT 376), Tübingen 2017, 1233–1251, here: 1238–1242.

183 Cf. Pierre du Bourguet, Entretien de Chenouté sur des problèmes de discipline ecclésiastique et de cosmologie, in: BIFAO 57 (1958) 99–142.

184 Cf. Lundhaug, Shenoute's Eucharistic Theology, 1239.

185 Cf. Brakmann, Zur Geschichte, 208–211.

While it is clear by the time of Shenoute that the issue is, at least for him, about fasting, we should not so hastily assume that the same is the case behind Socrates, and by extension Sozomen's, account. What is interesting about all of these sources – Socrates, Sozomen, and Shenoute – is that these celebrations of the Eucharist were still occurring in the evening. Behind this discussion is likely an older and still fresh memory of the connection between meal and Eucharist, especially on Saturday evening. This would be consistent with CH 32, which appears to be either a Eucharist or a vestige of one. However, Brakmann rightfully notes that it is implied that there is a period of time between the satiating meal and the evening offering according to Socrates, in particular, though the amount of time is not indicated.[186] But this might represent a recent development in some places, given that CH has the two still closely linked, though clearly a tension has emerged between them. What we may be seeing between CH, Socrates, and Shenoute, is the gradual disconnect of the communal meal from the Eucharist, with fasting now becoming the explanation for why in Egypt they could eat before the Eucharistic celebration. This would also explain why the communal or clerical meals would shift in later sources to after the Eucharistic liturgy.

While admittedly elusive, all of this may suggest that the presence of kitchens in these church complexes may point to the continuation of a Eucharistic celebration in the context of a meal. Most clearly, however, it supports a spectrum of meal practices that continued to closely link the Eucharist, other communal meals, and liturgical spaces into the fourth and fifth centuries. It likely provides further evidence for the contested nature of Eucharistic practice in this period and the need on the part of ecclesial authorities to establish clearer boundaries between Eucharistic and non-Eucharistic meal practices.

186 Cf. ibid., 202.

8 Conclusion

Liturgical historians, like scholars in other areas in theology, have increasingly called into question the old narrative that the legalization of Christianity in the early fourth century led to a radical break between pre- and post-Constantinian liturgical practice. In the process, scholars have often rightly suggested some liturgical developments once thought to date to the fourth century may in fact date to the third. But there has not been much reflection on the endurance of older pre-Constantinian liturgical practices in the post-Constantinian Church. Bridging the divide goes both ways. If there was not a radical break between the liturgical practices of the pre- and post-Constantinian church, then some pre-Constantinian practices undoubtedly were maintained in the post-Constantinian church. The tendency to not bridge the divide in both directions seems too often to be motivated by a concern for the origins of liturgical practices rather than their end.

The goal of this article has been to look at the developing spectrum of Christian meal practices. A review of the evidence reveals that there are tantalizing clues that suggest that the boundaries within this spectrum were still in flux in the fourth and fifth centuries and that the celebration of the Eucharist in a meal context likely continued in some places in this period. While much of the evidence is ambiguous, this paper has sought to review the evidence outside the traditional narrative that holds that by the early to mid-fourth century the normative Eucharist was the only type of Eucharist. It is worth summarizing the evidence:

- The cultural context from which the Eucharist emerged shaped the Eucharistic celebrations of early Christians. Especially impactful were older Graeco-Roman meal practices, especially *symposia,* the meals of *collegia*, morning *salutationes*, and *refrigeria*.
- The variation in Christian meals in the first four centuries can be put on a spectrum from Eucharistic to non-Eucharistic communal meals, with some ambiguity present in each period:
    1. The first and second centuries closely identify the Eucharist and communal meals, though it cannot be ruled out that some meals were non-Eucharistic. At the same time, early Christians also be-

gan focusing on the bread and (often) wine within the meal as early as the first and second centuries; …

2. … however, the Eucharist and its meal context were not distinguishable until the third century in some places and the fourth century in others. In fact, it is not until the third century that we begin to see a greater variation and spectrum of meal practices, with distinctions between the Eucharist and other communal meals perhaps becoming more pronounced. It is also in this period that we see a broad shift to a token distribution of bread and wine.
3. In the fourth century we see an even larger spectrum of practices but a narrowing of what is Eucharistic. This is what we would expect, as Bell and Belcher have noted, of the Eucharist, given that it is a central ritual in the community. Over time, as a central rite, the Eucharist is distinguished more and more from the meal contexts from which it emerged. It is also in the context of the fourth century that the normative Eucharistic celebration was being firmly and universally established. At the same time, what is Eucharistic and what is not is still in some cases contested.

— Some conclusions follow from these:

1. Likely not every Christian meal in antiquity was considered Eucharistic, but it is not really possible to distinguish Eucharistic and non-Eucharist meals in this period. There are, however, some key characteristics of the Eucharist:
   a. Bread and (often) wine are used;
   b. There is a prayer often in the form of thanksgiving;[187]
   c. The gathering of the whole community was important;

[187] Possible exceptions to this include the Eucharists described in *Acts of Thomas* and other apocryphal accounts. For more on these and a summary of current scholarship, see Bryan D. Spinks, Do This in Remembrance of Me: The Eucharist from the Early Church to the Present Day (SCM Studies in Worship and Liturgy), London 2013, 39–45; Bukovec, Die frühchristliche Eucharistie, 373–394. However, the interpretation of the texts in the *Acts of Thomas*, is particularly complex, see Susan E. Myers, Spirit Epicleses in the *Acts of Thomas* (WUNT 281), Tübingen 2010. For other variants, see Wagner, Altchristliche Eucharistiefeiern, esp. 65–68. 72–77.

   d. The belief in Christ's presence at that meal was central;
   e. There was a particular focus on the death and resurrection of Christ;
   f. Charity toward the broader Christian community was a hallmark of the Eucharistic celebration.

2. In fact, it is not until the fourth century that a clear distinction was emerging between Christian communal meals and the Eucharist. Before this we also do not see a widespread separation of the Eucharist from its meal context.
3. Evidence for *agapes* and other communal meals that were non-Eucharistic can be pinpointed in some places in the third century, but in most places in the fourth.

— The continued connection between the Eucharist and non-Eucharistic meals, and the possible endurance of the Eucharist within a meal context, as well as the contested nature of what meal practices were Eucharistic, can be seen in a number of textual and literary sources from the fourth and fifth centuries:

1. The church orders provide some evidence for the continuation of the Eucharist within a meal context. The first is ApTrad, particularly Ch. 29. At the very least, this chapter either represents a recent shift away from a communal Eucharistic meal to a non-Eucharistic meal, or points to a Eucharist still celebrated in a meal context, though the Eucharist has been distinguished from the meal itself. Similarly, CH canon 32 likely points to the celebration of the Eucharist in a meal context. Finally, ApCons 7.25 and 26 might provide evidence for the continuation of a Eucharistic meal. The practices described are clearly Eucharistic, but they either point toward an older practice that has recently fallen into disuse (that it in no way reflects a once real practice seems unlikely) or was continued despite representing a non-normative Eucharistic celebration.
2. The continued connection between domestic meal practices and spaces and the Eucharist also suggests that the Eucharist was still being understood through a meal lens.

   a. The continued reception of the Eucharist in domestic spaces before their non-Eucharistic meals points to a continued connection between the Eucharist and more conventional meal practices. Additionally, *De virginitate* either points to a Eucharist or communion service in the context of a domestic meal, making the connection even stronger. It also points to some ambiguity in what is considered Eucharistic.
   b. The continued celebration of the Eucharist in house churches or villa chapels links the Eucharist to older patronage practices and possibly meal practices. That these Eucharists were non-normative – ritually or otherwise – is implied by the conciliar legislation. This might not necessarily in every case suggest a connection between the Eucharist and a meal context, but there is evidence to suggest that in some cases it might.

3. The continuation of Eucharistic or non-normative Eucharistic *refrigeria* into the fourth century, as evidenced especially by episcopal attempts to co-opt them, strongly suggests the continuation of non-normative Eucharistic celebrations still patterned off older *refrigeria* practices. These meals also serve as a great example of ambiguous Eucharistic practices and the contested nature of Eucharistic practices in some places and among some groups in this period.

— The presence of full – and in some cases large-scale – kitchens within church complexes in the fourth century points to the use of these kitchens for more than just token distributions of bread and wine within the Eucharistic celebration. They may have been used for a variety of functions, none of which are mutually exclusive:

1. *The production and distribution of food doles* – Already in the first three centuries the Eucharist was a direct and/or indirect source of material support for some members of the Christian community. This continued in the fourth century, when extra offerings given at the Eucharist were redistributed to the clergy,

the sick, widows, and the poor. These kitchens may have been used to prepare these food doles.

2. *The preparation of non-Eucharistic meals for the clergy and community* – It is clear from sources like the CH, the *Canons of Athanasius,* and other conciliar legislation that clergy would celebrate meals together in the church or church complex, often after the Eucharistic celebration. Similarly, the sources indicate that there were also communal meals open to all the faithful. While it is often not specified where these meals occurred, it is reasonable to assume that they often occurred in the church or church complex, as some of the conciliar legislation clearly indicates.
3. *Celebrations of the Eucharist within a meal context* – There are hints in some of the sources, like the CH and Socrates' *Historia ecclesiastica,* that the Eucharist may still have been celebrated within the context of a meal into the fourth century. While by this time the Eucharist and the meal would have been distinguished from one another, they still likely occurred together in some locations.

Thus, it seems that the connection between the Eucharist and non-Eucharistic meals in the Christian community endured beyond the third century, as did the celebration in some locations of the Eucharist within the context of a meal. Looking at this variety in Christian meal practices in antiquity as a spectrum, can help scholars and practitioners today reconnect the Eucharist to our domestic and communal meal practices.

Bibliography

List of figures

Abbreviations

AAWG	Abhandlungen der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen
ACC	Alcuin Club Collections
ALw	Archiv Für Liturgiewissenschaft
ApCons	Apostolic Constitutions
APF.B	Archiv für Papyrusforschung und verwandte Gebiete. Beihefte
ApTrad	Apostolic Tradition
ArtB	The Art Bulletin
BIFAO	Bulletin de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale
CATT	Christian Arabic Texts in Translation
CCSL	Corpus Christianorum Scriptorum Latinorum
CH	Canons of Hippolytus
COGD	Corpus Christianorum: Conciliorum Oecumenicorum Generaliumque Decreta

DFIFAO	Documents de fouilles de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale du Caire
EO	Ecclesia Orans
ExF	Ex Fonte – Journal of Ecumenical Studies in Liturgy
HTR	The Harvard Theological Review
IPM	Instrvmenta Patristica et Mediaevalia
JAC	Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum
JBAA	Journal of the British Archeological Association
JECS	Journal of Early Christian Studies
JJP	Journal of Juristic Papyrology
JJP.S	The Journal of Juristic Papyrology. Supplement
JLA	Journal of Late Antiquity
JS	Journal des Savants
JSJ	Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman Period
JThS	Journal of Theolgoical Studies
LiCo	Liturgia Condenda
LNTS	Library of New Testament Studies
MDAI.K	Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts. Abteilung Kairo
MHS.C	Monumenta Hispaniae Sacra. Serie Canónica
NHMS	Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies
NPNF2	Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Series 2
OLA	Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta
OR	Ordo Romanus / Ordines Romani
OS	Ostkirchliche Studien
PG	Patrologia Graeca
PL	Patrologia Latina
PLB	Papyrologica Lugduno-Batava
PRG	Pontificale Romano-Germanicum
QD	Quaestiones Disputatae
RQ	Römische Quartalschrift für christliche Altertumskunde und Kirchengeschichte

SChr	Sources Chrétiennes
SECL	Studies in Eastern Christian Liturgies
SPLi	Studia Patristica et Liturgica
SSL	Spicilegium Sacrum Lovaniense
STAC	Studien und Texte zu Antike und Christentum
StLi	Studia Liturgica
StPatr	Studia Patristica
StT	Studi e Testi
StTT	Studia Traditionis Theologiae. Explorations in Early and Medieval Theology
StSil	Studia Silensia
SVigChr	Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae
SVPPS	St. Vladimir's Seminary Press Popular Patristics Series
TDSA	Testi e documenti per lo studio dell'antichità
TU	Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur
VigChr	Vigiliae Christianae
WGRW.S	Society of Biblical Literature: Writings from the Greco-Roman World. Supplement Series
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
ZAC	Zeitschrift für Antikes Christentum / Journal of Ancient Christianity

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