



Guests of the Crucified¹

ERNST KÄSEMANN

Let us begin by taking a look at those congregational assemblies best exemplified by the discussion in 1 Cor 11:17–34. The gatherings take place every evening and include a celebration of the Lord’s Supper. Worship opens with a common meal. Every member of the congregation has brought something, as each is able, which ensures that all those in need are at least able to satisfy their hunger. The assembly is marked by a spirit of fellowship that expresses itself particularly toward the poor, the sick, slaves, widows, and orphans. Because of this, the celebration is called Agape—a “love feast.” At that time, the Lord’s Supper was apparently not yet an appendage of a preaching service. Moreover, it was not celebrated only occasionally, but belonged inseparably to the Christian assembly. Finally, it was not limited to a morsel of bread and a swallow of wine, but constituted the greatest part

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Who is included among the “family” welcomed at the Lord’s table, and what are the criteria for participation? More than thirty years ago, Ernst Käsemann responded to these questions in this provocative address, one that continues to be cited regularly in ecumenical conversations, especially in Europe. Particularly striking are the author’s assertions that “the Lord’s Supper is ecumenical or it is no longer the Lord’s Supper but a sectarian observance” and “those who do not tolerate among themselves all the guests of the Crucified no longer tolerate in their midst the Crucified himself.” The address has not previously appeared in English.

of a regular meal. Just as the heart and soul were refreshed, so was the body—and all of that in a feast in which individual members grew into the fellowship of the body of Christ.

In 1 Cor 11:25, Paul says somewhat oddly that the cup was passed around “after supper.” That could mean that the bread was given sometime toward the beginning of the love feast, while the wine was offered at the end. In that case, the Lord’s Supper would have framed a worship service that included the proclamation of the prophets and instruction in the Scriptures along with common prayer and praise. At least in Paul’s missionary area, then, the early Christian congregation gathered daily, and its members, in the presence of the Lord, became guests of the Crucified and witnesses of the risen Christ. In their this-worldly eating they anticipated already the celebration of the kingdom of God and understood themselves to be jubilant representatives of the heavenly congregation.

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We must hold this picture firmly in our mind in order to understand what now seems incomprehensible to us. The apostle speaks about the Lord’s Supper here only because it is being abused in Corinth. Apparently, the worship of the early church was not yet so formal (perhaps even unearthly) as is often the case with us. The Corinthian congregation was composed primarily of those at the lowest social levels in this harbor city. Many could come to worship only when they were released by their employers after a very hard day or when they were able to slip away from their large household. So it was natural that they often came late. But there were also more affluent members of the congregation who controlled their own schedules and who became impatient when they had to wait too long for their sisters and brothers, especially when they were not sure whether those others were coming at all. They had brought food and drink with them and, because they were hungry, they began to eat. The more they celebrated, the greater their exuberance. For them, too, it was not merely a matter of satisfying their hunger. They saw themselves as guests of the coming kingdom of heaven; yet, remaining entirely human, they behaved not at all like part of a bourgeois society with a strict moral order and ideal ethical principles. Many of them were more interested in putting aside everyday orders and rules than in defending them. They hungered and thirsted for freedom from the oppression of patrons and slaveholders no less than for physical food; they wanted to forget their worldly troubles, to be able at last to praise with the angels the triumphant justice of God. Those of us who have ourselves been grasped by rebellious impatience cannot fail to understand when out-cast members of society break out of the usual social conventions in order to demonstrate their place as citizens of heaven, how they even become intoxicated in

their enthusiastic (*schwärmerisch*) exuberance and leave those brothers and sisters who come late only the remnants of the meal that was meant for all. Naturally, one cannot condone that. But the question Paul sets before the Corinthian congregation applies to us all: When does one become a worthy guest at Jesus' table? We must answer that question from a variety of perspectives.

1. THE LORD'S SUPPER

It will be helpful to speak only of "the Lord's Supper." All other descriptions are too indefinite and therefore allow misunderstandings. To be sure, it is not false when we usually just say "the Supper" (*Abendmahl*). Early Christian usage and the words of institution justify this term. Nevertheless, it is then left to us to determine which perceptions we connect with the term, raising thereby the danger that our personal expectations, needs, and experiences prove decisive. This was already true for the Corinthians. They celebrated the in-breaking freedom of the reign of God and, intoxicated by that, they forgot their way on earth, forgot their poorer brothers and sisters. Our own overriding concern at the Lord's Supper might be contrition over our guilt and over our many vain attempts to begin a new life with God, with our parents, our spouses, our children, and our neighbors—or even to come to terms with ourselves. Who would want to exclude either of these concerns from the celebration, which certainly offers place for both bliss and remorse and which wants to provide both freedom and forgiveness? But dare either of these be at the center? Would not this make either our sinful or our pious humanity, our own longings and distress, overshadow the one who says, "My body, my blood, for you"? It is essential that he and he alone remain at the center, that he and he alone be heard and received.

What happens when we make ourselves most important can be seen today by all: fewer and fewer guests find their way to Jesus' table, and they come less and less often.² To "go to communion" becomes the sign of particularly pious groups, who, though they cannot replace the whole congregation, see themselves nevertheless as the true congregation and lapse all too easily into sectarian arrogance. Where it is no longer taken for granted that the entire congregation regularly responds to the invitation of its Lord, the meal easily becomes marginalized, a place of refuge for true believers, and thus a dividing wall in the middle of the Christian community and a barricade against the world that God wants to bring home. Then Christ is left in the lurch, as he was by his disciples at Golgotha. What matters is to look to him, to hear him, to receive him, to allow him to act upon us. He will bring with him whatever else we need. Celebrating the Lord's Supper means to be called into the Lord's presence, before his face. That is the simplest, most comprehensive, and most beautiful description of his disciples, which even the hosts of heaven cannot outdo: we stand in the presence of Jesus.

²Translator's note: In the Protestant churches of Käsemann's day, communion in many churches was celebrated not during, but after the regular service. Often, only a small group remained to participate.

But will this statement suffice? Perhaps many will find it too simple. Can we—dare we—leap over the theological controversies that have been associated with the words of institution and that still divide denominations from one another as though such disputes concern only specialists? Yet, the experts would be amazed and horrified were they to take notice of the fact that they and their theological debates are no longer understood nor supported by the so-called laity. The gap between them and their own congregations is often greater than that between them and other denominations. That does not mean, however, that dogmatics can be pronounced superfluous and that praxis should always be given precedence. There is no life and no discipleship that can afford to give up on thinking, on distinguishing between what is true and false, and on clarifying precisely the nature of its heartfelt faith. On the other hand, one dare not abandon life and discipleship to

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the pedants or, worse, the heresy hunters, fanatics who want to stamp us all in their image (or perhaps after their own illusions) and put everyone in the congregation into the same uniform. One can deny food to the hungry because one is busy determining its nutritional value with analyses and tests. There are incontrovertibly some theologians and ecclesiastical administrations for whom denominational differences in this broken world are more important than our brotherhood with the Crucified. That which we reverentially, yet perhaps dubiously, call “sacrament” is sometimes so overblown that the Lord who gave it to us takes a back seat. Any child who hears the words “My body, my blood, for you” understands that the Lord’s Supper is not about swearing allegiance to a religious party or worldview, nor to particular ecclesiastical traditions or the speculations of our forebears. Neither is being drawn into mystical depths or metaphysical heights to everyone’s taste and certainly not everyone’s idea of salvation. At Jesus’ table, however, no one is spared from hearing in the words of institution—quite childlike—that our Lord wants to come to us here, to move in with us, to make us his own in order to lay claim to our hearts and our lives. Can one expect more? Believe more? Know more? Is this not enough for any of us? Is this not already to experience heavenly bliss here on earth, that our Lord gives himself to us and brings us, with this meal, into his presence for time and eternity?

2. GUESTS OF THE CRUCIFIED

“Lord’s Supper” was our first keyword. A second follows: “Guests of the Crucified.” It is not without reason that the one who gives himself to us does so with

the words, “My body, my blood, for you.” Even after Easter, our Lord deals with us by pointing us to the cross. He will never do otherwise. For even on the Last Day his enemies will recognize him by his wounds; these are what distinguish him from all gods and all secular rulers. We learn who Jesus truly is only from Golgotha. Here, like nowhere else, we learn what it means to be truly God and truly human. Christ must enter into death—more, into the hell of hatred, scorn, and ridicule—in order to help us. Who can affirm this without losing, at their very core, all illusions about themselves and this world? Whoever has stood beneath the stake of the Crucified knows that salvation does not arise from our own reason and strength. At the same time, we become aware of a God who sheds his glory and dons the dress of a slave in order to become like those who have forsaken him, who rebel and entrench themselves against him, those idolatrously bent on power and pleasure. Golgotha is the place where the depths of forlornness meet the depths of self-denying compassion. That is why all of us, each in our own way, can find here both ourselves and our Lord. Those who here join in the hatred and ridicule will continue to place law and order and status quo above humanity. Those who look on indifferently will make their own self-interest the measure of all things. Those who here see the truth about themselves and who learn to cry with Jesus, “My God, my God,” will continue to keep Golgotha before their eyes, letting it determine their relation to those near and far, to the forces and powers, to the rules of society and the political necessities of our time. Golgotha was and remains a place of both blessing and curse, a place where, even among Christian churches, the spirits divide—even though not all have taken notice. For the true church and the false church, otherwise scarcely distinguishable, divide when it comes to saying yes to Jesus’ cross, to taking the Crucified Lord as their own.

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Of religious movements there are enough and to spare. Many are more profound, stronger, and more fascinating than Christianity, so again and again Christian communities squint to the right or the left, make compromises, borrow this and that, and betray Golgotha. The truth of the gospel, however, binds the kingdom of God to Jesus’ passion here on earth, in the shadow of which alone the godless experience salvation. To be guests of the crucified is not an experience only for pious hours spent behind the thick walls of our churches in the circle of like-minded worshipers. To become guests of the Crucified is at the same time both the pilgrim journey and the goal for Jesus’ followers. That is what Paul uses to counter the Corinthian enthusiasts. There is nothing wrong with seeing the heavens open

and the Holy Spirit coming upon the congregation, exercising free reign within it. But everything depends upon whether or not the open heavens still display the image of the Crucified or only the fulfillment of our own dreams; whether the Spirit remains that power that gives us the Nazarene as our Lord or whether it simply alienates us from everyday life, allowing us to forget the battle in which we are to be engaged.

Apparently, the Corinthians did not understand themselves to be guests of the Crucified when they celebrated the Lord's Supper. Instead, since some of them would have belonged to mystery religions before their conversion, they saw Christ as some kind of pagan redeemer, leading their souls away from the control of the stars and demonic threats and into heavenly freedom and immortality. That made sense. After all, Christ, like them, had lived as a proletarian, and he, like countless rebellious slaves, had been crucified by the Romans as a terrorist. All the more fascinating then was the news that this one, who had been condemned on earth, had broken the power of death and fate and now wanted to bring his faithful followers with him to that place where suffering, cries, and tears were no more. In Corinth, the Lord's Supper had become a mystery celebration in which participants reexperienced Christ's own journey—called through deepest indignity into the glory of the victor, and now, in union with him, given participation in heaven itself.

Now 1900 years have passed. But does that mean the way the Corinthians celebrated the Lord's Supper has passed? Don't we still see the cross primarily as a way station on the journey to perfection? Don't we see Jesus as an example of how suffering serves to test us in preparation for what we will be granted in the coming bliss? Don't we regard his table as a place of rest for the tired, a religious elevation above our everyday life, a view into our eternal home? Those things ought not be disparaged; but if the Lord's Supper offers nothing else it remains for us too a mystery celebration in which God and pious souls come together, leaving the world behind. This is the primary issue: Dare we in the Lord's Supper exclude this world and anticipate heaven as though we belong already to the band of the perfected? To put it polemically, yet necessarily: Do we, at least in our Western churches, not too quickly hear the call to gather together when what is needed is the call to continue marching on? Are our worship services not too closely focused on our own needs (sometimes even imagined ones)—without first having tirelessly resisted them—while forgetting that entire continents have become stomping grounds of the demons? How can we celebrate the Lord's Supper in an affluent society while increasingly accommodating ourselves to the surrounding conditions, not even noticing our idols, much less naming them and daring to offer resistance?

It is understandable that the Corinthian congregation, in the misery of the slums, longed for heavenly freedom. It is right and in accord with Jesus' will that those who are exhausted, broken, lonely, and deathly ill still find consolation in the invitation, "Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens," but the majority of those who attend our churches find themselves in a different

situation. For them, everyday life is defined by a society that dances around the golden calf, that relies on the police to protect its property and privilege, on NATO to defend it from the communist danger, and hopes that a nice God will let them live without serious troubles and preferably die in peace. Dare the guests of the Crucified seek to justify this mode of existence and ask that God protect it—even on Sunday at the table of Jesus—expecting that in the end God will crown it with a place in Abraham’s bosom? A Kirchentag³ that lacks the confidence to raise this question loud and clear is not worthy of the name.

3. ON BEING UNWORTHY

Paul dared to raise such questions with his proletarian congregation in Corinth. He must have shocked them to the core when he proclaimed them “unworthy”—they who vaunted their heavenly status. That is the third keyword for us to consider. It takes us, however, into dangerous territory, where countless Christians in every age have gotten lost and which has so terrified others that they have preferred to avoid the Lord’s Supper altogether. So, before we delve into the matter itself, we will have to “demythologize” a little.

Today, we label “unworthy” something that violates proper decorum or sins against our notions of morality. Therefore, millions have asked themselves again and again whether they are able to fulfill the external and internal conditions that are appropriate to the Lord’s table or that appear appropriate to our standard conventions. Those who are older will remember that their parents, or certainly their grandparents, went to communion only in black clothing or even in a frock coat and top hat, circling the altar as a procession of penitents. The organ played softly, and people worked at not only *appearing* to be conscious of their guilt, but *actually* to be so in the depths of their being. The more they were able to do that, the more worthy was the celebration and the more worthy the participants.

We have no right to look down on such centuries-long custom. Devout worshippers honored their Lord in this manner and, at the same time, bore witness that they acknowledged God as their judge. Anyone who has been in a church completely filled with such guests at Jesus’ table will never again call human piety into question without also showing it their respect. However, such devout piety is not self-evidently “evangelical.” There is an unmistakable contradiction when Jesus’ congregation makes so much fuss about its own worthiness, coming to the Lord’s Supper with fear and trembling, while their Master is busy gathering his guests from the highways and byways, including Samaritans, pagans, tax collectors, and prostitutes, inviting them not into fear but into joy. In his day, those whom the Jews regarded as particularly worthy, like the scribes and the Pharisees, were not well represented among his followers. For a long time, those who would make up

³Translator’s note: The German “Kirchentag” or “Church Congress” is a biennial meeting (a lay movement) that serves to gather Christians in order to strengthen their faith and to prepare them to take responsibility and bear witness in the world. The first Kirchentag was held in 1949.

what might be called “good society” were more the exception than the rule at his table. What happened to make such questionable characters appear less and less frequently at worship (at least visibly)? What happened to make the Christian community, at least in our part of the world, represent only the respectable bourgeoisie?

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We will have to go deeper. Certainly, we all have need from time to time to take stock of ourselves and come to terms with what we have done and failed to do. Those who never critically examine their own lives and hold their own personal judgment day may well forget their own humanity and be more prone to ascribe guilt and error to others. On the other hand, even the strictest self-examination will scarcely penetrate the depths of our heart with its mixture of spite, desperation, and the propensity to deceive ourselves and others. We can only come before the eternal judge without dread because he has already opened his arms to us like the father of the prodigal son. We and our forebears have obviously misunderstood the invitation to Jesus' table if we have not kept in mind that Christ seeks the fallen, the weak, and the guilty, gathering to himself only those who are unworthy before God. Brushing off the dust and removing the smudges cannot change the nature of our old selves. Since the one who becomes our brother was himself called the most despised and most unworthy, we will have to follow him in his ignobility, exposing ourselves without reservation to his light, and trust our salvation entirely to his compassion. Only those who do not deserve it sit at Jesus' table.

Unworthy meant something different for Paul than in our world. For him, the word was taken from the language of commerce where it meant that the two pans of a scale were not of equal weight. Our “doesn't measure up” would have the same meaning. Thus, the apostle was not referring to the inner condition of the members of the congregation but rather to their behavior at the love feast. What “doesn't measure up”—that is, what would be contrary to the Lord and his cross—was the behavior of those who didn't wait for their brothers and sisters at Jesus' table, leaving those latecomers to eat the leftovers or to go hungry, all the while feeling themselves carried away into heaven and noisily announcing their devoutness. There is only one capital offense at the Lord's Supper, and that is the denial of fellowship. To do that is to betray the one who left his place at the right hand of God in order to rescue those not so devout from their scorn and abandonment, making them members of his realm. For their sake he gave himself up to the power of death

and hell. Thus, the “heathen” were and are those who do not allow those nearest to them and furthest from them to share in grace, with all its gifts, instead allowing them to lie in front of their door like Lazarus or, at best, fobbing them off with a handout. One might praise, pray, and act devout at Jesus’ table and still be a betrayer like Judas—who nevertheless joined in the Lord’s Supper.

The practice of fellowship is a characteristic of true worship, and any follower who leaves a neighbor without care and without love in some hell on earth lives with a false faith. As Paul says, any such would be guilty of the body and blood of Jesus, creating Golgotha once again in their own way. It is possible to be one with the angels, anticipating the rule of God on earth, but nevertheless to hear the Judge on the last day asking, “Where is your brother Abel?”

4. NO MYSTERY CELEBRATION

There are consequences to be drawn from all of this. Protestants at least should refrain from the misguided and inappropriate talk of a “mystical meal,” which would be suitable only for the celebration of a mystery religion. The main thing we need to learn from 1 Corinthians is that the table of Jesus is not merely about the union of souls with the heavenly Lord. And if we do want to express that sense of the celebration, we would at least have to be clear that the Lord’s Supper, like baptism, unites us with the heavenly Lord by integrating us into his earthly body. That is exactly what we see in the verses that frame our text, 1 Cor 10:16–17 and 12:12–13. And the text itself says precisely the same thing. The word “soul” is not there at all. Instead, the text unswervingly emphasizes the physical. People eat and drink rigorously and noisily. The words of institution speak of body and blood and do so in order to produce physical solidarity.

For the apostle, at least in the verses of our text, everything depends on the meal producing and maintaining community; it is celebrated rightly only when the whole congregation participates in it. That should not be understood legalistically. These days our parishes have become so large that we should encourage holding the Lord’s Supper in families, homes, and the so-called base communities—as in fact it was in the early church. Nonnegotiable, however, remains the fact that these dare not become gatherings of the like-minded. When we separate ourselves internally and externally from those followers of Jesus who believe, think, and act in ways other than ourselves, we produce sects. Then it is not Christ’s earthly body that is built up; instead he becomes the chieftain of an ecclesiastical party, his lordship becomes a domain in which pedants and inquisitors have the last word and where the “pious” are left happily among themselves, undisturbed by other brothers and sisters. A Christian community does not wear religious uniforms. Instead, as paradoxical as it sounds, they live in an ongoing situation of mutual familial disturbance. Otherwise, they are not based in Golgotha. Their Lord has not made them more humane, but doctrinaire and illusionary.

If this is where we are, then the Lord’s Supper can now be celebrated only in

penitence and protest. No one can dispute that throughout the Christian world we see happening precisely what Paul called despising the body and blood of Jesus, which was punishable with temporal and eternal judgment. In fact, everywhere and unceasingly, Christ's invitation to come to his table and into his presence is countermanded by Christians, theologians, ecclesiastical administrations, and denominations, who instead practice and defend the refusal of communion fellowship. There is no justification and no excuse for that. In doing it, God's name is desecrated, his kingdom impeded, his will opposed, and all talk of the unity of the church is exposed as pious babble. People don't want to be unified—or only when the others ideologically capitulate. The so-called laity are gradually catching on to this. That is why they increasingly distance themselves from Jesus' table or come clandestinely to an ecumenical service, contrary to the precepts of their denominations and spiritual advisers. That is their protest against the ruling theologies and the ecclesiastical powers-that-be. The Lord's Supper is ecumenical or it is no longer the Lord's Supper but a sectarian observance, because the Crucified calls to his table all for whom he died. The dogmatics were written later. If even Judas was not excluded and if our baptisms are by and large mutually recognized, sacrilege is committed not by those who celebrate along with other brothers and sisters but by those who deny communion to those others. Before the church calls others to repentance, it must first repent of these actions. For those who do not tolerate among themselves all the guests of the Crucified no longer tolerate in their midst the Crucified himself. They are no longer part of the body of Christ on earth, but represent instead a closed society and a religious interest group.

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5. AN OPEN COMMUNITY

Finally, let us sharpen the point. I have deliberately spoken about a closed society since, at least in the churches of white culture, that term best describes our normal communion celebrations. But that was precisely not the case with the love feasts of early Christian worship. There, catechumens and even unbelievers could also participate. No doubt, some from the slums of the harbor city found their way to Jesus' table merely to satisfy their hunger. When guests of the Crucified gather, they always do so as a fully open community. Where that is not true, the body of Christ cannot grow on earth as it is meant to do according to the missionary commission of the resurrected Lord. To put it bluntly: when Christians gather, the warm nest has to be broken open. It is no longer about some—who barricade themselves inside against the evil world and, in the presence of their private god, satisfy their personal needs for edification, peace, and comfort—and others, out-

side, who have no baptismal certificates, pay no church taxes, and who hope for no help from God or other people, even though they too need the Good Samaritan to cross over to them. The Lord's Supper is not only the feast of the deeply unworthy but also of the needy, the yearning, the oppressed, the despairing, and the accursed of this world, because the supper is the reflection of Golgotha in our present time. None can be a guest of the Crucified who is unable to cast off the cloak of borrowed or imagined piety in order to stand with the naked, the freezing, and the despised outside the door of the church, to be their neighbor. When we truly celebrate the Lord's Supper, the line from the Twenty-third Psalm is fulfilled: "You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies."

Let us not forget that the Corinthians celebrated in view of the coming end of the world; they were an open community because they worshiped in the presence of the Crucified and therefore also in protest and resistance against the demonic powers and forces of this world. One cannot be a guest of the Crucified without defying Christ's enemies and declaring war against all tyrants. When the body of Christ on earth is built up by the Lord's Supper, a new world sprouts, and we see something of what it means that our God is an enemy of the haughty. He creates a new earth and a different heaven than any we have dreamed of—a heaven in which the lowly, the violated, and the lost finally come home to the Father.

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Folks who had washed up from both the Orient and the Occident came together in the Corinthian congregation—harbor workers, slaves, manual laborers, women of questionable reputation, widows, but also those who were well-to-do or those who had once been members of a synagogue or a mystery religion. They were united by nothing other than their one Lord. But this Lord gave all of them a place at his table, satisfying them physically and spiritually. He sent them prophets and speakers in tongues, which proclaimed the breaking in of a new age; he brought about acts of healing among them and exorcisms of evil spirits. He filled them with his presence so they were intoxicated with it as on the day of Pentecost. Earthly barricades fell here, and social differences and antagonisms could no longer endure, which gives these worship services worldwide significance. The presence of Christ has power to blow open business as usual, to break through the borders of class, nationality, race, economic systems, and cultural traditions, to make the open community a sign of freedom for all those oppressed by the powers and the principalities.

People in Corinth knew that Christ was there "in the presence of the ene-

mies,” just as had been true at his birth and on Golgotha; they knew that his followers were called into the battle between him and the opponents of his rule. By taking their places at the table of Jesus, receiving from him food and drink and being filled with his Spirit, the guests of the Crucified separate themselves from the tables of Egypt, where people care only for themselves, each living at the expense of the neighbor or of those far away, paying homage to the gods of this world. One cannot celebrate at two festivals at the same time, cannot serve two masters at the same time, cannot worship at the same time the Crucified and the tyrants of this world. One cannot capitulate to the affluent society, while, within the walls of the church, naming God as Lord and Judge of all his creatures and remaining in fellowship with the community founded at Golgotha. Our faith, too, has a cost, and love demands nothing less than our lives. For the sake of the Lord and the freedom he bestows, the guests of the Crucified will have to be seen as rebels against the powers and principalities of this world, because the cross of Golgotha will not accommodate itself to the earthly orders. It marks the one who serves the lost, even unto hell; it makes as a law of the Lord’s heavenly dominion that we follow him in this service and prepare a place at Jesus’ table for his brothers and sisters.

Might we not practice this open community as a sign? Perhaps it is not possible under the prevailing circumstances regularly to combine our congregational assemblies with a celebration of the Lord’s Supper. Perhaps we can revive the love feast, as practiced among the Corinthians, only in small groups or on special occasions like, say, a Kirchentag. But would it not be possible and meaningful, at least now and then, to begin worship immediately with the celebration of the Lord’s Supper so that everyone sees that they are invited to be guests of the Crucified with no conditions whatsoever? Might we not, in a closed world, practice at Jesus’ table the fellowship of a community that is open to the world and to heaven, one that celebrates its freedom in the presence of its Lord and their enemies? We bear witness that Christ no longer leaves humanity to itself, that he has established his kingdom among us. His meal is the place where we, his guests, celebrate the breaking open of the dominion of the powers and the principalities of this world by the Crucified, making his followers into conquerors. ⊕

ERNST KÄSEMANN (1906–1998) was an eminent Lutheran theologian and New Testament professor who was active in the resistance movement during the Nazi era and who, later in life, increasingly challenged the status quo of German cultural Christianity.

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