

CHAPTER 8

The Pauline “Lord’s Supper”

8.1 The “Lord’s Supper” in 1 Cor 11

Paul’s excursus on the Lord’s Supper in 1 Cor 11 can be broken into four distinct phases. The first is the situation which has provoked his remarks: these are prompted by reports of divisions and factionalism (11:18-19). Paul analyses the situation and attributes the factions to bad practice which has arisen around the rituals of the Corinthian church. He offers corrective advice which is based on the precedent set by Jesus. This is a novel addition: only the Pauline account explicitly attributes the repetition of the rite by later Christians to Jesus (Moffatt 1938, 169). This constitutes the second phase (11:20-5). He then turns his attention to the theological issues which arise from the Corinthians’ practice (third phase: 11:26-9): this allows him to identify the rationale for the eucharist, what in particular should be achieved through participation (particularly 11:26, 29), and the nature of the “Body”. In the fourth and final phase, which overlaps with the third, particularly in the phrase “discerning the body” (διακρίνων τὸ σῶμα- 11:29) he develops his views on theory and practice to warn of potentially dangerous consequences (particularly 11:27, 30-4). The flow of this argument, especially in the latter stages, is complex, so the explanation given breaks with the order of the text to take related themes together.

8.2. Phase 1- Setting the Scene: Divisions and Bad Habits

[1 Cor 11:17-19]

Paul has set the *paradosis*, the narrative of the Last Supper, within a Corinthian setting. This starts, as do many of the points in 1 Cor, with factionalism (σχίσματα [11:18], αἰρέσεις [11:19], cf. 1:10-18; Schrage 1991, 21-2). The identification of the different faction or factions is vexed. The issues which divide the congregation are many. A cursory overview of 1 Cor suggests divisions based on a variety of topics, which may possibly be sub-

divided further: leaders and their authority (1:10-6; 3:5-4:18; 9:1-27; cf. Smit 2002), various issues about sex and marriage (5:1-13; 6:12-20; 7:1-39), idol-meats (8:1-13; 10:1-32), women and worship (11:1-16; 14:34-35), the conduct of the community meal (11:17-33), gifts of the spirit (12:1-14:33; 14:36-40) and the resurrection (15:1-58; cf. Kümmel 1984, 272). Other issues may lie behind these issues: Greek philosophy (Tomlin 1997; Winter), nationalism (Tomlin 1997, 54-5), cult practice (Barrett 1971, 262; Horsley:1998, 157; Schüssler Fiorenza 1988, 226-230)¹, gnosticism or proto-gnosticism (Kümmel 1984, 274-5) and rhetoric (Mitchell 1991; Watson 1989). It is important to remember that these different issues may not all stem from one particular group. The issue of ritual meals appear, for example, to be divorced from that of personalities and leaders (Fee 1987, 537; Thiselton 2000, 850; 857)². It is also anachronistic to consider this as a debate between Paul and his “opponents”:

This dualistic antithesis fails to do justice to the plurality of community praxis in early Christianity; besides this it attributes to Paul an absolute authority to which he did not even lay claim.

(Schottroff 2000, 53)

Given the complexity of the congregation that this suggests, and the demand that this would make to identify each problem and plot their inter-relationships, it must be clearly stated that this study cannot do full justice to the issue of the factionalism at Corinth. This might be done thoroughly by examining the problems in isolation, and from the amalgamation of these individual studies to proceed to a more detailed mapping of the Corinthian congregation. In such a case, this work would be but one preliminary step. Studies of individual problems are not a novelty, examples include Baumert, Deming and Rosner’s work on sexual questions (1996, 1995 and 1994 respectively), Byrne on the place of women (1988), Carson on the spiritual gifts (1996), Fotopoulos and Still on idol-meats (2003 and 2002 respectively), Gordon on divorce (1997) as well as Meyer’s collection of essays on the ritual meal (1993).

Nor are the issues all equally complex. For example, Fotopoulos is able to identify 14 different interpretations of the existence of an idol-meats controversy and its context (2003, 41-8). In contrast, there is a greater

consensus about the problems of the ritual meal, and these provide the basis from which the following investigation takes place. Thus, Schottroff can describe the conflict in the following terms:

Exegetical discussions interpret in very monochrome terms the conflict among the Christians in Corinth (mostly presented as a conflict between Paul and his 'opponents'). In keeping with Hellenistic-Roman custom, people bring their own food for the meal. However, there exist wide social distinctions in the community (cf. 1 Cor 1.26) and those who are well off have better food and other customs at table than the hired workers and slaves. The rich do indeed understand themselves as part of the community, and they come to its assembly, but on the whole they separate themselves from the others and eat what they have brought as a private meal (11.21,23). They show no consideration for those who are worse off, who cannot bring much, and whose food is also of poorer quality. This results in inequality: some go hungry while others are drunk (11. 21,22). The rich justify their behaviour by appealing to the hunger they feel (11.34,22).

Other members of the community see this as contempt for the community, and Paul shares this view (11.22). Tit also wounds the holiness of the body of Christ (11.29). This meal must have been a humiliating situation for the poor, whose dignity as children of the one Creator of all human beings was called into question.

(2000, 53)

Paul's description of the effects of bad practice supports this: it brings shame on those who are badly treated (*καταισχύνητε* τοὺς μὴ ἔχοντας- 11:22 [italics mine]). Paul has previously used the word in 1 Cor 11:4-5, and it reflects not a purely economic division, but the stratification of society by the criteria of honour/shame (Thiselton 2000, 826-7; 865)³.

The controversy would appear to be genuine: there is no reason to assume that Paul would import fictional disputes into his dealings with a genuinely divided congregation (cf. Fotopoulos 2003, 259-61). Paul's comments appear to be prompted by reports which he has heard from Corinth: ἀκούω (cf. 1 Cor 1:10-4:21; 5:1-13, further in Thiselton 2000, 849). He considers that there is some truth to the reports, but does not necessarily believe all that he hears (μέρος τι πιστεύω- Hering 1962, 113). The factions reveal those who are trustworthy (οἱ δόκιμοι [11:19]). The δόκιμοι appear to be set in an

eschatological context (Conzelmann 1975, 194, fn. 15), to guard against presumption or spurious faith (Thiselton 2000, 859). An alternative ironic interpretation is possible (Horsley 1998, 159), which would mock the self-justification of those who were eating badly. Whichever is preferred, both explain why these divisions might persist until the End.

8.2.1. Economics and Status

Some commentators to suggest that the central issue at Corinth was that some arrived late for the meal: they are not blamed for this. It is essentially symptomatic of a division driven by economics (Henderson 2002, 200). It is possible that practice of patronage found in Graeco-Roman clubs and societies may have influenced the conduct of elements within the Christian congregation⁴.

The rich could afford to arrive and begin eating early (Collins 1999, 418). This left the poor (τοὺς μὴ ἔχοντάς - 11:22), who needed to work, unable to share in the full meal (thus, Frör 1995, 59). Both groups, in this scenario, shared just bread and cup (Burchard 1987b, 127).

This widely held interpretation is not without its critics (cf. Thiselton 2000, 863; Schrage 1991, 57; cf. Witherington 1994, 249)⁵. Note that Schottroff has made no explicit temporal distinction in her summary (above). Das (1998, 188-9) notes that the terms used to support this thesis are ambiguous. Προλαμβάνω (11:21) and ἐκδέχομαι (11:33) may or may not involve a temporal component (cf. Gal 6:1- Collins 1999, 422). Yet this may be only a minor quibble. However, as Schottroff's summary makes clear, there is more to the bad practice of the Corinthians than mere timing.

The criticism may also refer to a different practice, the provision of different food and drink to different guests. This was a common practice, highly criticised in literature of the time (Ch.3, p. 75-6, ¶ 3.2.2.). Thus, 11:21's cautions about over-indulgence (μεθύει) are often taken as referring to social or economic inequalities which are not addressed by the participants in the meal (Bornkamm 1971, 192). Theissen's analysis of Corinth also concentrates on economic factors and proposes that the rich enjoyed better

food. His analysis, too, is essentially economic. However, Paul's categorising of the issue as one which brings shame suggests it is possible to look beyond economic considerations.

The centrality of economics as a rule for society and behaviour is in many respects a modern phenomenon. It is attractive to a modern, industrial society, especially in the period after Marx, but need not indicate how other societies work⁶. However societies may be differentiated by factors other than wealth such as status and cultural perspective (Harlow & Laurence 2002, 3). Ancient Roman society was not stratified using economic indicators alone. It appears better to use status as a measure and take into account a number of dimensions by which identity can be measured (Meeks 1983, 53-5)⁷. It is true that status and wealth are connected, but the two were not identical in Ancient Roman society: Pliny only mentions a potential husband's wealth as the last item in a list of favourable characteristics⁸. Status, rank and wealth were all important (Harlow & Laurence 2002, 59)⁹. Even where wealth was not an issue, status was determined by other factors:

We have seen that the plural *lower classes* probably better describes the divisions of Roman society than the singular *lower class* because there was a range in both the incomes and the social status of Rome's humble masses. There were free men and freedmen, men who worked for a very low wage, men who were hired for temporary jobs, men who owned some property, men who owned none, and so on. Similarly, there was not one upper class. The old aristocratic families treated the *nouveau riche* with disdain, and senators and equestrians were often suspicious of one another's interests. On the hostility toward wealthy freedmen, see selection 210.

(Shelton 1988, 138, fn. 66)

Divisions arose between Christians of different rankings, as well as between rich and poor. D'Arms' account (1990) of the politics of Roman *convivia* deals primarily with issues of status: his article at no point mentions wealth as an indicator of hierarchy in Roman meal practice. From this perspective, it is possible to consider whether distinctions based on status as well as economics might be present.

8.2.2. *Status: Eating Wheat Bread?*

Such a distinction may even include the basic elements of the meal. If some were excluded from sharing in bread (ἄρτος), this might represent their exclusion from an aspirational foodstuff (Ch.6, pp. 278-9, ¶ 6.6.2.). It may be objected that “bad sharing” condemns not only their eating habits, but also the removal of status which should have been granted to them by participation in the ritual (eating wheat bread). Those excluded might even have construed this as a removal of their God-given status or privilege, or that they were being humiliated by others within the congregation.

But what led some of the Corinthians to assume that such things were appropriate? Burchard gives a plausible reason, that contemporary sacramentalism gave the Corinthians room to think they could alter the elements used from bread and wine to whatever they wished (1987b, 127). In short, the Corinthians have placed the emphasis on the meal, and, by incorporating elements of popular custom and religious practice, got it wrong. Paul is attempting to redress the balance.

8.3. Phase 2- The Corinthian Meal & Jesus’ Precedent

[1 Cor 11:20-22]

Much of the discussion of Jesus’ precedent, in terms of actions and utterance, has been examined in the previous chapters: such points need not be repeated here¹⁰. Paul’s interpretation introduces a number of new terms by which the ritual is explained, and it is on these that the following remarks are based. Of particular importance is the term used for a meal (δεῖπνον) and the adjectives used to qualify it (κυριακὸν [11:20]; ἴδιον [11:21]).

8.3.1. *ἴδιον - Whose Meal?*

The term ἴδιον (11:21) is used to describe the meal which was eaten by the erring Corinthians: Initially contrasted with κυριακὸν, it is of great importance in ascertaining roles and behaviour at the meal in Corinth.

8.3.1.1. Ἰδιον and Κυριακὸν

Paul distinguishes good meal practice as κυριακὸν, the Corinthians' bad habits are defined as ἴδιον. This distinction serves as a corrective to current Corinthian practice (Schrage 1991, 29). It works in two ways.

The first can be characterised as “ownership” of the meal. Right practice means that the ritual is “of the Lord”; bad practice obviates this association. It may also reflect a cultic parallel, possibly from Graeco-Roman ritual, that food is no longer the possession of the provider once it has been blessed, but belongs to God (Galgalo 2001, 2)¹¹. If the food is still “their own” (ἴδιον), it implies that the Lord is not identified with it. Those who introduce divisions are putting themselves in the place of the true host of the meal, the Lord (thus, Thiselton 2000, 862). This excursus contains echoes the *paradosis*: Jesus, the Lord, is to be the focus of attention and “owner” of the meal. The Corinthians' current practice frustrates this.

The second is eschatological. Kasemann (1964, 122) uses the distinction of “Lord's” and “own” to argue against a Corinthian view that the Last Supper is a realisation of the Messianic Banquet (and that they are already enjoying the heavenly banquet in all its fullness). Such a view is based on an “over-realised” eschatology seen elsewhere in the letter¹². In contrast, Paul places the Last Supper between the Resurrection of Jesus and the Parousia: he presents a futurist understanding. The Corinthians are still *in via*: they have not yet arrived.

8.3.1.2. Community and Household

A further distinction is also brought out in Paul's contrast of the worshipping community and household practice. When he criticises bad eating practice, he asks the Corinthians whether or not they have homes in which they might eat or drink (1 Cor 11:22). The rhetorical nature of the question enhances the contrast. Common household practice is not applicable to the community of faith (Thiselton 2000, 865). A clear warning is being made: the community's meal is not to follow the pattern of ordinary household meals.

8.3.1.3. Ἰδιον and Κοινά

A second set of associations may also be at work. Ἰδιον may also be contrasted with κοινά. Whilst κοινά is not used in 1 Cor 11, the related term κοινωνία is used of the meal in question in 1 Cor 10:16. The contrast between the two terms is centred on holiness and justice (Schottroff 2000, 54). This juxtaposition is found in Acts 5, when Ananias and Sapphira take for themselves what has been promised to God. Paul's warning is clear: the selfishness of those who do not eat properly puts them in a dangerous position, even to the point of death (1 Cor 11: 30, cf. Acts 5:5,10).

8.3.2. Δεῖπνον :The Meal in Corinth

Δεῖπνον appears to have been a regular word for meal, but not particularly precise in its reference:

It is not possible to come to any helpful conclusion about the nature of the meal from the use of the word *deipnos* for "supper". The word usually referred to a late afternoon meal (whence the appropriateness of the English "supper"). In the Bible it is never used to mean merely an act of eating: it refers to a meal, and its appropriateness for a festal meal is ambiguous.

(Orr & Walther 1976, 272)

It may be used of cultic meals, sometimes associated with commensality with the deity (Behm 1964b, 34-5). The context here implies that the meal has taken the form of a full meal (Das 1998, 197), in which some people eat until they are satisfied (ὄς μὲν πεινῶ, ὄς δὲ μεθύει - 11:21).

8.3.3. Pauline Reform: A Token Meal

It is interesting that Paul does not correct the Corinthians' behaviour so that they will eat a meal together properly. Indeed, elsewhere, the ethical dimension of congregational problems is not exhausted by simply addressing the problem of eating well but demands wider fundamental changes in attitude (Rom 14:17, cf. Shogren 2000, 256).

Paul rather instructs the congregation to eat and drink at home, and then meet together (11:34). He reduces the sharing and full meal aspect, and accentuates the importance of actions concerning bread and cup. This does not mean that an ethical dimension is missing. However, the ethical dimension is not primarily about the alleviation of hunger (Witherington 1994, 252). Rather, the sharing of the Lord's Supper should mean that all share in the elements specified by Paul so that status distinctions are removed (Fee 1987, 544). The sharing of bread (a high status foodstuff) should give a meaning that none are marginalised according to contemporary patterns based on status.

This does not demand a participation in a full meal, but certainly demands a sharing of both food and drink elements. This certainly appears to have been a move in the eventual shaping of the eucharist as a token meal, but need it represent a breach with the original meal? Is it not possible that Paul's reformation of the Corinthian ritual is a call to return to basics, and to a ritual focussed on bread and cup?

8.3.4. A Token Meal: Back to Basics

After all, this would square with the Gospel traditions. In the Synoptic traditions, the emphasis is very much placed on these two events, bread and cup: the *Seder* details are, at best, confused. The meaning of the Passover is of much greater significance than the ritual actions of the meal (Rowland 1985, 25). The *Seder* provides a setting for the two actions rather than a precedent for later Christian ritual and practice. John goes even further, dispensing with any meal description, with the possible exception of a feeding miracle, and relying on a discourse to provide his sacramental teaching (John 6, cf. Ch. 4, pp.172-4, ¶ 4.4.6.). It becomes possible that the focus of the emerging Christian ritual was a token meal rather than a full meal (King 1997, 166). My earlier writing needs to be modified in light of this research. The current focus on context, lacking from the earlier writing, gives a different dimension to the situation which Paul addresses.

It is possible to conjecture that the reforms suggested by Paul in Corinth show a distortion of a token meal tradition by the incorporation of practices current in their society. From this viewpoint, Paul is not making the eucharist into a novel ritual rite, but returning it to its earlier shape. This does not mean that Paul demanded a reformed ritual that would involve the account of the Supper as a liturgical text (McGowan 1999b, 80). He describes what Jesus did as an exemplum, not a rubric (cf. Marshall 1987, 111; Thiselton 2000, 868).

His reform demands a reconsideration of the emphasis of the meal, in which a correct sacramental understanding has a priority over social concepts such as fellowship, though the two terms are not exclusive.

8.3.5. Paul's Reform: A Note on the Use of Culture in Theology

Paul's criticism of the Corinthian practice highlights an important principle, namely, that not every cultural adaptation is helpful. The adoption of common practice (religious or household) has not assisted Christian celebration; rather it has been detrimental. It cannot automatically be assumed that every attempt to inculturate is beneficial to Christian thought or practice. Yet whilst engaged in such criticism, Paul is still able to use the vocabulary of the *symposium* to describe his programme of reform.

His excursus has a strong social dimension: ranking has not worked, and is divisive (Schottroff 2000, 55). His conclusions differ from those offered in the Ransom Logia which advocated a ranking pattern based on service (above Ch.7, pp. 346-8, ¶ 7.5.2.-3.). In Paul's view, the current meal practice of the Corinthians is to be banned rather than reformed. This may arise from experience: behavioural change and liturgical practice has so far failed to address the problem. Further, to place all the importance on ranking does not do justice to the sacramental and ethical dimension of the problem and Paul's reforms. This is not just a social issue: it cuts straight to issues of holiness, expressed in correct behaviour. These issues of holiness in their turn impinge on the benefits or dangers which arise from sacramental eating. One may eat well and live, or badly, and die (see further below, pp. 394-7, ¶ 8.5.3.).

Considered against a wider background, Paul's recommendations conform more to the pattern of the Greek *symposium* than the Roman *convivium* or Jewish ranking at meals, and echo the wider dispute over meals found in Roman literature. It is perfectly feasible that a controversy over ranking might have arisen in the Corinth of the 1st Century CE. The city was a Roman foundation on the site of earlier Greek city on the Greek mainland. In such circumstances, disputes between Greek and Roman customary practice might well have arisen. However, Paul's answer does not depend on the received wisdom of Greek or Roman, but on the exemplum of Jesus (Henderson 2002, 200).

It has been suggested that the controversy may arise from a difference in opinion about sacraments. Yet it would be inaccurate to think of Paul, a sacramentalist, locking horns with Christians at Corinth who rejected sacramental theology. Against such a scenario, it is notable that Paul does not address sacramentalism, or rather the lack of it, as his objection to Corinthian practice. That such sacramentalism is found in 1 Cor 15:29 is also used to criticise this view (Conzelmann 1975, 275). If there is a difference over sacraments, it is not over their value, but how they operate.

1 Cor 10 provides an insight into the difference. Paul reminds the Corinthians of the precedent given by the Israelites in the wilderness, who ate and drank but were nonetheless condemned (1 Cor 10:4-6). Consumption of sacraments is no guarantee of salvation (Harrisville 1987, 202). Paul appears to be criticising theology similar to that of the Mysteries: that the benefits are received *ex opere operato* (see Ch.7, pp. 357-60, ¶ 7.8.2.: Barrett 1971, 224). Paul re-iterates the need for an ethical or moral dimension to eating practice. This theme surfaces again in his excursus on the consequences of the different eating habits (below, pp. 393-4, ¶ 8.5.2.)

Further, Paul has not automatically adopted *ex opere operato* sacramentalism. He has engaged with such beliefs, demanding a re-evaluation of practice which is not based on Graeco-Roman criticism, but a typology which draws rather on Old Testament figures and the Judaic pattern of *dono data* (Ch.7, pp. 357-60, ¶ 7.8.2.).

Paul has aligned his preferred meal practice with a pattern which stresses equality rather than social status¹³, Jewish sacramentalism, the exemplum of Jesus, and Old Testament precedents.

8.4. Phase 3 - Paul's Interpretation of The Meal

[1 Cor 11:26, 29]

In verse 26, Paul begins to give his own analysis of these utterances and rituals. That this verse is interpretation rather than quotation is suggested by the description of the bread as “this” (τοῦτον) and of the Lord’s death (τὸν θάνατον τοῦ κυρίου) rather than the use of the first person genitive seen in 11:25 (ἐμῶ/ἐμῆν)¹⁴. Our primary concern at this point is to note the significance that Paul places on participation in the ritual, as explicated in his interpretation. He brings out two main themes, the first (11:26) is concerned with “proclaiming the Lord’s death”, the second with “discerning the body” (11:27).

8.4.1. “Proclaiming the Lord’s Death”

Every performance of the meal ritual (ὁσάκις) is a proclamation of the Lord’s death (Hering 1962, 118). The introductory γὰρ suggests that the tradition cited by Paul (11:23-5) is being used as the basis for this argument (Thiselton 2003, 886).

Καταγγέλλω is commonly associated with proclamation and preaching, often in terms of public speaking or verbal proclamation of something which has taken place (Schniewind 1964, 71-2). Here the act of proclamation is not just linked to an act of speaking, but to a ritual. Thiselton (2000, 887) sees parallels to the Passover *Haggadah*, inasmuch as it allows participants access to the events symbolised (in this case, the death of Jesus) for the benefits and ethical demands with which they are associated.

The final phrase ἄχρι οὗ ἔλθῃ imports an eschatological dimension. In this respect, the Pauline account is similar to the Lukan, which focusses on this

feature (Ch.7., pp. 339-41, ¶ 7.4.1). Both build on expectations found within some strands of Second Temple Judaism which associated the Passover with Messianic redemption (Bruce 1986, 114).

Ἄχρι οὐ ἔλθῃ is open to interpretation in two ways. Much has been made of the phrase on the assumption that it anticipates the Aramaic *Maranatha* (1 Cor 16:22, see also Ch.5, p. 250, fn. 50). It may be taken as having either a temporal or purposeful force. Jeremias (1987, 252-5) argues for the latter. This would suggest that the primary focus of the phrase was the coming presence of Christ in the eucharist rather than at the Parousia. Our earlier analysis of *Maranatha* (see Ch. 5, p. 237, ¶ 5.4.11) does not support this. Indeed, such sentiments are not found elsewhere in eucharistic and eschatological thinking (Thiselton 2000, 887)¹⁵. The priority is not so much to remember the Passion as to pray for the future consummation of the Kingdom. God is reminded that events have yet to be fulfilled. Thus, the temporal force adds a corrective “not-yet” to the realised eschatology so prominent in Corinth (Witherington 1994, 251). The coming of the Lord is anticipated, and the eucharist is to be performed until that time. The people of God have yet to reach the final consummation of the God’s plan and purpose. Until that time comes, the eucharist prefigures the ultimate promised reality of the heavenly feast.

8.4.2. “Discerning the Body”

Paul talks of the need for participants in the meal to “discern the body” (διακρίνων τὸ σῶμα-11:29). The question of discerning is intimately connected to the next phase, which identifies the consequences of the failure to do so (see below, pp. 394-7, ¶ 8.5.3.).

8.4.2.1. The Body as “Community”

Paul uses σῶμα here primarily as a reference to the community, symbolised by the Body of Christ. Thus failure to distinguish the body has a communitarian and ethical dimension:

Which for Paul comes down in the end to the matter of “rightly discerning the body”- i.e., recognizing that the Lord’s Supper is a sign of the unity of the Body of Christ, and behaving accordingly

(Hays 1994, np)

This understanding is echoed elsewhere:

Likewise, in 1 Cor 11, the bread as the symbol of the “body of Christ” designates the community, not the corpse of Jesus: “For all those who eat and drink without discerning the body, eat and drink judgment against themselves”. The “body” that must be recognised is the community. Similarly, the eucharistic prayers of the Didache understand the bread as the symbol of the community: “As the broken bread was scattered upon the mountains, but was brought together and became one, so let your church be gathered together from the ends of the earth into your kingdom”

(Koester 1998, 346)

Henderson has recently explored this as the dominant motif in Paul’s discourse (2002). Her claim that Paul wishes to correct the Corinthians’ apparent inability to share depends on οἰκία/οἶκος being identified as the community, rather than a private house, and that the second instance of πεινᾶ (11:34) refers to the hunger of the poor, as in 11:21 (2002, 206). The second point does not hold up: different groups would appear to have different experiences of hunger. It is difficult to equate those who go hungry at the gathering (11:21) with those who are advised to eat at home before the community meets (11:34). If so, the hungry of 11:21 are the poor, and it is they who are advised to eat at home, not the wealthy. To work, Henderson has to identify οἰκία/οἶκος with the community gathering. Henderson may also have read too much into the description of the Kingdom of God as an οἰκία/οἶκος (2002, 204): sometimes an οἰκία is just a house or family (Michel 1967, 132). It is also worth noting that Henderson’s argument, which depends on identifying οἰκία/οἶκος with the Christian community offers no parallels in the Pauline literature (Horrell 2001, 304). Indeed, Michel notes a distinction of οἰκία/οἶκος from the community as a whole: it indicates rather the smallest group within a congregation (1967, 130). Further, the use of οἰκία/οἶκος in the plural (1 Cor 11:22), with the implication of a multiplicity of groups would undermine one of Paul’s main concerns in the letter: the establishment of

unity. This becomes more striking when it is contrasted with his identification of the community as a singular body, τῆς ἐκκλησίας τοῦ θεοῦ (1 Cor 11:22). It is difficult to see how any formal encouragement of separation into house churches would have built up the unity which is intended (cf. Bond 2003, 191). Thiselton goes further: the Lord's Supper which Paul wishes to take place is not to be confused with a meal in a private house (2000, 859).

Whilst Henderson's interpretation has the merits of highlighting the ethical demands which Paul would demand of the Corinthians, it does not seem to do justice to the elements on which judgement is focussed. The "Body" appears to lose all significance beyond being the community as an agent for an act of "sharing".

There is also a practical criticism: could the "bread" and "cup" to which Paul draws specific attention (11:25) ever form the basis of a full meal which ever would dispel the hunger of those who are in need¹⁶? Significant gestures focussed on shared bread and cup would not seem the best place to initiate such a reform. However, what Paul proposes does give honour and respect to all comes from looking not at the quantities of food, but the quality. Paul wishes all to receive ἄρτος (bread). The significance of this is often overlooked: ἄρτος indicates a high status food stuff, wheat bread, rather than the more common barley bread (μᾶζα- Garnsey 1999, 121; Schnackenburg 1980, 442, fn. 25: see further in Ch. 6, pp.278-9, ¶ 6.6.2.). What is at issue here is the sharing of a food which accords high status, not the alleviation of hunger. The elements used themselves suggest this. The initial contention that sacramental language may be more appropriate than "sharing" comes from further exploring the vertical dimension of the "Body of Christ".

Whilst Henderson's interpretation has the merits of highlighting the ethical demands which Paul would demand of the Corinthians, it does not seem to do justice to the elements on which judgement is focussed. The "Body" appears to lose all significance beyond being the community as an agent for an act of "sharing". Henderson's argument also seems to reduce sacrificial language to a purely metaphorical understanding, a phenomenon which has already been questioned as anachronistic (Ch.7, pp. 331-3, ¶ 7.3.5.). Elsewhere, the "horizontal" and "vertical" dimensions of faith have been identified (Ch.3, pp.

72-3, ¶ 3.1.1.). Arguments which concentrate exclusively on “sharing” run the risk of addressing only the “horizontal” (inter-personal) dimension of faith and practice. The “vertical” aspect has been all but discarded in favour of the “horizontal”. However, the sacramental dimensions to the Corinthian situation suggest the “vertical” dimension (between believer and deity) must also be reformed. It is legitimate to question whether reforms which focus on sharing really do justice to the significance of the Body of Christ.

8.4.2.2. Christological Implications of the “Body”

Thus far the “body” would appear to be identified with the community. Yet it is identified as the Body of Christ, and, as Schweitzer notes, this implies a reference to the glorified Christ. How communion with Christ occurs is not clear:

The difficulty lies in the fact that the body and blood of the historical Jesus no longer exist for Paul, and that while the glorified Christ no doubt possesses a body, that body is not one through which blood flows and which can be materially eaten. To speak of the body and blood of Christ is an absurdity from the point of view of the apostle's doctrine. As regards his eucharistic doctrine he is unable to adjust the historical words with his own Christology and yet he must do so. The compromise he attempts remains obscure to us.

(Schweitzer 1911, 156, trans. in Schoeps 1974,116)

Hering makes a similar point working from an ecclesiological perspective:

A clear impression is even given that what interests him primarily in the doctrine of the body is its presence in the Church, which is founded on the communion with Christ actualized in the Eucharist. That is why we find no explanation of the manner in which the body is present in the bread. All that can be said is that genuine communion with the dead and risen Christ is made possible by the bread.

(Hering 1962, 116)

How can this “genuine communion” be described? The body and blood of Christ cannot be identified with those of the historical Jesus. Schweitzer's description is puzzling: it appears overly realistic. The answer lies not in realistic views of eating, but in symbolism. Schweitzer's further contention that

Paul was unable to reconcile his Christological thinking with the historical datum (the words of institution) needs to be examined.

8.4.2.3. The Mysteries: A Source for Christological Meaning?

Others have sought to explain the resolution of this puzzle by reference to the Hellenistic Mystery religions. Thus, communion theology is, to use Schoeps' neat phrase, "essentially a piece of Jewish-pagan syncretism" (Schoeps 1974, 118). Yet this approach is not without its difficulties. The first line of these concern Paul: how did he gain an understanding of what were essentially secret rites? Are we to posit either his own initiation, which seems unlikely, someone who acted as a secondary source, who remains unidentified, or an unquantifiable amount of theological data about the Mysteries that were in the public domain, and to which we are unable to refer? Related to this is the inability of its adherents to explain how such a theological manoeuvre would have been any more acceptable to Paul than any other theologian of a Jewish background (Ch.7, pp. 319-20, ¶ 7.3.3.2.).

The second line concerns the nature of the Mysteries themselves. Many of these theories envision a theology of the Mysteries in which the participant obtains communion with the deity through ingestion. Yet, the research in Ch.3-5 reveals that there is insufficient evidence to support these theologies. Often they seem to have arisen in later generations in reaction to Christian teaching. Thus, there would appear difficulties with such proposals. Further, the influence accorded to the Mysteries may be overemphasised. As our research has shown, a number of other rituals and traditions must be investigated. More mundane and common meal traditions may lie behind much of the controversy in Corinth, and form the centre of engagement rather than the Mysteries. To look for answers in the Mystery Religions may be to search in the wrong place.

8.4.2.4. Maccoby and the Mystery Religions

The numerous shortcomings of such approaches have been examined in detail in the preceding chapters. It would be valuable, however, at this point, to summarise these succinctly. A critique of Maccoby (1991b, 124-5) allows this.

First, Maccoby describes “ingesting the deity” as “characteristic of mystery religion”. From the beginning the argument is based on an un-nuanced generalisation which does not hold up under close scrutiny (Ch.4, pp. 153-9, ¶ 4.3.4). The argument that follows involves logical jumps between different cults and their associated rituals. Such a process cannot be viewed as acceptable given the more pluriform understanding of the mystery religions demanded by historians of religion and classical scholarship (Ch.5, pp. 214-5, ¶ 5.3.3.4.).

Second, there are problems with the details. His more detailed analysis identifies the Eleusinian mysteries with Dionysus. This too does not hold up: the primary focus was on the cult of Demeter and Persephone (Ch.3, pp. 83-4, ¶ 3.2.8.1.), although there was some relation to Dionysus (Ch.4, pp. 156-7, ¶ 4.3.4.3.).

Third, he describes a ritual in the Attis cults as a meal which allows the initiate to participate in the passion and resurrection of Attis. This is by no means certain (Ch.4, p.158, ¶ 4.3.4.5.). Further, the language of passion and resurrection is not identical within the two cults (Ch.5, p. 213, ¶ 5.3.3.2.).

Fourth, Maccoby refers to a poetic commonplace, which contains a “poetic residue of sacraments”. He cites no specific examples for consideration in their lexical context, but, presumably, has in mind texts like Ovid, *Met.* 6. 488. He is highly selective in his choice of gods, pointing only to deities associated with foodstuffs which suit his argument. Elsewhere in classical literature the trope is used of deities in contexts which can have no possible sacramental residues (see further in Ch.4, p.156-7, ¶ 4.3.4.3.).

Fifth, the vicarious nature of the “dying God” is not always apparent within such cults (Ch.5, pp. 212-5, ¶ 5.3.3.).

Further, his contention that such concepts were based on long outmoded totemic or cannibalistic feasts demands a conjectural middle stage, also open to criticism (cf. Ch.4, pp. 156-7, ¶ 4.3.4.3.). His writing here depends on an analysis of the Dionysiac cult, in which he claims to identify a middle stage of tamer rituals on the basis of the *omophagia*: our research has shown that this is highly speculative, if not impossible. All in all, the highly speculative details

and the sweeping generalisations, which allow all Mystery Religions to be treated as identical so that details culled from different cults may be knitted together into a chain of arguments, do not bear close scrutiny. The conclusions reached are far in excess of the sum of the constituent parts.

8.4.2.5. "Sacramentals": A Source for Christological Meaning?

The sacramental thinking of the Mysteries has also been suggested as a source for Paul's theology. This research suggests otherwise. The Mysteries appear to have informed the theological opinions which Paul is attempting to correct. Burchard has suggested a different origin for Paul's sacramental thinking: it comes from Judaic reflections such as those in *Jos.Asen.* In his analysis of *Jos.Asen.*, Burchard described "sacramentals" (Ch.4, p. 145, ¶ 4.2.8.3.), in which ordinary items, by means of a blessing, effect a holy purpose. There are two stages in the proposed evolution of Paul's thinking.

The first is Paul's personal journey in which the sacramentals of Paul's pre-conversion belief-system would be replaced by the elements of bread and cup (Burchard 1987b, 123)¹⁷. It is a classic example of re-accentuation, and appears to be supported by the interpretation of the Exodus narrative given in 1 Cor 10. In what is really a piece of *Midrash*, Jesus is identified with the manna and the water from the rock (Thiselton 2000, 723). Finally, the contrast of the Lord's cup and table with those of demons further confirm this pattern:

Moreover, since for Paul the Lord's Supper holds the place which the blessed bread, cup, and ointment hold in *JosAs* as opposed to food and drink from the idol's table, he is able to express the contrast between the two by means of an antithetic parallelism.

(Burchard 1987b, 123)

The link of such thinking to Jewish ideas would appear to be supported by the arguments used by Paul:

Therefore, contrary to what some think, Paul does not seem to operate with a *prima facie* resemblance of the Supper and certain pagan ceremonies. He is at pains to get a measure of it established, building on a traditional Jewish opposition between Jewish food and food from the idols' table.

(125)

Whilst not demanding a direct dependence of Paul's thinking of *Jos.Asen.*, Burchard's analysis allows the construction of a Pauline argument based on ideas and concepts current in contemporary Judaism which would allow a sacramental understanding of the Christian ritual without recourse to the world of the Mysteries. In this pattern, the cup and bread effect contact with the body and blood of Christ.

The second stage is Paul's use of such sacramental beliefs to engage with, and correct, the Corinthian meal pattern. He is engaging with a "Mystery style", *ex opere operato* sacramentology, and replacing it with a Judaic *dono data* system which includes an ethical response from the participants (cf. Ch.7., p. 357-60, ¶ 7.8.2.; above, p. 379-81, ¶ 8.3.5.).

8.4.2.6. "Sacramentals" and Κοινωνία

Whilst agreeing with Schweitzer that the physical body and blood of the historical Jesus no longer exists, Burchard argues that contact with Christ is possible. However, whilst Burchard appears to suggest that Paul operates with a "long-distance κοινωνία with body and blood" (Burchard 1987b, 125), a closer connection can be argued.

First, such a view seems strange phrase given Burchard's earlier analysis of the meal, in which he says of 1 Cor 10:16:

He says rather that the cup and the bread, in addition to what they convey to us, bring us into contact with the very blood and very body of Christ.

(124)

This contact depends on seeing the ritual celebrations as extensions of the Last Supper; a view developed in 1 Cor 10:17-8 (124). Such a view of the meal would conform not just to *Jos.Asen.*, but to some understandings of anamnesis in which key events are more than remembered: they are *made present* (Behm 1965, 739). Such a pattern of "remembering" was central to the understanding of the Passover ritual, and may be one factor in explaining why the Synoptic writers were keen to emphasise the association of the Last Supper and the Passover meal.

Second, it seems to demand a distinction between the realistic and the figurative, which was not in keeping with some of the developments in

emerging Christianity (see Ch.7, pp. 331-3, ¶ 7.3.5.). Nor is it the case that Paul's identification of the body was just figurative or parabolic. This stems from Paul's understanding of *κοινωνία*:

By expounding the *ἐστίν* of the Words of Institution in terms of *κοινωνία*, Paul makes it quite clear that from his angle it is simply not possible to distinguish between the two dimensions in question in the way in which modern thought distinguishes between a thing and its image. According to the understanding of antiquity, the representing dimension does actually bring about the presence of what is represented and therefore mediates participation in it. Thus, whatever objections may be raised against the terms "Real Presence", it expresses exactly what Paul wants to say.

(Kasemann 1964, 128)

8.4.2.7. "Sacramentals" and "Extension of Personality"

The above view of sacramentals ties in with Hebraic thought, particularly with the phenomenon identified as "extension of personality" in which a person's words or representative can stand in his or her place:

A person's words, or his messenger or his servant, for instance, are his own 'extended personality' in that they serve his purpose and effect his will, though clearly there remains also a distinction between the person and such extensions. In accounts on the Old Testament 'theophanies' there is often an oscillation which makes us (that is, Western Europeans) unsure as to whether it is the Lord or his angel who has appeared. Within this conceptual pattern the eucharistic elements both *are* and *are not* Christ himself.

(Wainwright 2003, 136)

This combination of "sacramentals" and "extension of personality" show that the presence of Christ in the elements can be explained by reference to concepts already present and familiar within Second Temple Judaism.

8.4.2.8. The Pauline "Body": A Development of Judaic Thought

Thus, the concept of "body" developed by Paul in these verses draws on essentially Jewish traditions. Some of these are explicated by reference to *Jos.Asen.*, but not all: both "extension of personality" and "anamnesis" are found more widely. There is no need to import controversial ideology from the Mysteries to explain his thinking. Nor is it necessary to demand that any

particular interpretation excludes any other (Hering 1962, 119)¹⁸. The “body” has both a communal element, which involves ethical claims:

It is by means of our actually eating the broken bread and drinking from the cup of blessing that he makes us partakers of his crucified body and of the new *diatheke* founded on his blood.

In the last resort, then, Paul's central tenet is this; the bodily self-imparting of Christ in the sacrament claims us for concrete obedience in our bodies within the Body of Christ.

(Kasemann 1964, 135)

It allows for a sacramental encounter with the glorified Christ in what can be well summarised by the later anachronism, “Real Presence”, already part of sacramental currency and identifiable in the bread of 1 Cor 10:16-8; 11:23-5 (Theissen & Merz 1998, 419-20).

Within such sacramental understandings, the meal is not just a means to communion or fellowship, but is the self-manifestation of the Lord:

Because, on his gift cannot be separated from himself, this gift does not merely convey impersonal death-or-life-giving powers. Because, on the contrary, it brings with it the Giver himself, indifference towards it is impossible. His presence can never leave us unchanged. We do not, by our own lack of reverence, render his gift ineffective nor turn the presence of Christ into absence. We cannot paralyse God's eschatological action: salvation despised becomes judgment.

(Kasemann 1964, 125)

This combination of communal, ethical and sacramental views reveals a new focus: eating is somehow connected to eschatological concerns (judgement and salvation). In the last part of his argument Paul spells out the implications of this to his correspondents at Corinth.

8.5. The Consequences Of Eating the Pauline Supper

[1 Cor 11:27-8, 30-4]

Paul presents the Corinthians' meal practice as something which he cannot applaud because it morally damaging to the Corinthians. This ethical

dimension is reflected by κρεῖσσον (“moral good”, cf. 1 Cor 7:9, Phil 1:23; cf. Hering 1962, 112). Kasemann has suggested that “salvation despised becomes judgment” (1964, 125). How an individual partakes of the meal ultimately determines whether he or she is saved or not. To test the truth of this claim, the terminology used to describe judgement and its consequences needs to be spelled out. That the action of eating has a moral or ethical dimension is spelled out by the use of ἀναξίως (11:27). Whilst used in 1 Cor 6:2 in adjectival form to suggest “incompetent”, the wider sense of “fitting”, with its ethical overtones, appears more appropriate here (Thiselton 2000, 889).

“Discerning the body” is not an action without consequences. Paul intimately connects eating with a number of words connected with judgement. The one who eats and drinks without discerning the body is also eating and drinking judgement (ὁ γὰρ ἐσθίων καὶ πίνων κρίμα ἑαυτῷ). This leads Paul to advise that each participant examines the way in which they partake of the meal (δοκιμαζέτω - 11:28).

8.5.1. Discerning *the Body*

Paul’s understanding of the Body reveals that this is a term which bears a number of different meanings: communal, ethical and sacramental. Paul reminds the Corinthians of the need for each participant to be one who is διακρίνων (11:29) the Body. What exactly does this mean? “Discern” has been used thus far, but it includes ideas connected to right judgement, or of recognition (Thiselton 2000, 892).

Some have seen this as suggesting that those who do not judge properly confuse the food of the eucharist with profane food and drink (cf. Kasemann 1964, 124), but such a distinction is not present within the context of the argument (Barrett 1971, 274; Thiselton 2000, 892). For others, the primary failure is to fail to recognise the true nature of the congregation, and this might include its mystical identification with the “Body of Christ”. Parallels with 1 Cor 10:16-7 and the absence of qualifying phrases relating to “blood” and the “Lord” bolster such interpretations. However, they fail to do justice to the much

more complex symbolism of the Body which has already been recognised. For this to happen, there must be some way in which Christ is recognised in participation in the meal. Wolff identifies the key:

Sharing as participants in the death of Jesus 'for you'.

(trans. in Thiselton 2000, 893)

Thus right judgement (*διακρίνων*) is about identifying Christ, and becoming involved in his death. People who do not see the Lord in this way do not celebrate the Lord's Supper: they are guilty of his body and blood, i.e., his death. They align themselves with those who kill Jesus rather than those who proclaim his death (Kasemann 1964, 123).

Given our earlier remarks, *διακρίνων* thus has a sacramental dimension, inasmuch as Christ's presence must be recognised: event and symbol are not distinct (Ch.5, pp. 199-200, ¶ 5.1.). Failure to discern the symbol is equally a failure to discern the event, the death of Christ, which is being conveyed with its entire efficacy to the believer¹⁹.

8.5.2. Eating, Judgement, Magic and Mysteries

On a number of points the possible interplay between the rituals of emerging Christianity and the Mystery Religions has been discussed. It arises again here. Ritual meals are presented as offering blessings to participants. Such ideas can be seen in the Mysteries where correct participation in the rituals and, where appropriate, foodstuffs guaranteed salvation. However, the strong ethical dimension which appears repeatedly in Paul's criticism and reform of Corinthian practice suggests a different understanding of how rituals work: right worship alone is not enough. It must be accompanied by right ethics. This combination is not apparent in the Mystery Religions (above, p. 379-81, ¶ 8.3.5.).

Some commentators, such as Meeks (1983, 103) identify such language with magic ("magical effects"). This contradicts what is actually being described:

Let no one accuse us of imputing to the Apostle a magical conception of the sacrament. Here indeed the opposite is the case. For magic consists in

influencing the supernatural through nature; here it is grace which must penetrate into the natural world.

(Hering 1962, 120, fn. 52)

Magic also suggests an automatic effect: Paul's view that one may partake of the sacraments and suffer or die, clearly indicates that he is thinking of something else (Filson 1950, 95; Loisy 1962, 237). It is difficult to see why either the Mystery Religions, for reasons given above, or magic, associated with solitary and antisocial, not communal, religious behaviour, need be invoked as potential sources, when their actual *modus operandi* is so different to that proposed by Paul.

It is possible that such associations might be drawn from socio-historical research. The idea that a medicine or potion (φάρμακον) might act as a poison or healing drug was common both to Graeco-Roman medicine and magic. Jewish Christian usage of φαρμακεία, including the LXX, usually has a sense of sorcery (BAGD, 854). However, such magical associations are not exclusive, and appear to be predicated on that particular term (Thiselton 2000, 895-6). It must be noted that the text under consideration does not even mention φάρμακον/φαρμακεία: the first of which may also have medical, not just magical associations (BAGD, 854). Excessive weight cannot be put on the use of particular terms, which are not themselves present in the text and, in any case, appear divided between medical and magical use.

8.5.3. *Eating, Judgement and "Sacramentals"*

Other possible antecedents for Paul's thinking can be found in the same source as much of the other sacramental thinking: Jewish theology of the type expressed in *JosAsen. Jos.Asen. 8:5* (See Ch. 3, pp. 104-5, ¶ 3.3.7.1.) associates bad results with "wrong eating" of the kind exemplified by the idolatrous pagan meals in which Aseneth formerly participated. Again, the φάρμακον/ φαρμακεία terms themselves are not in evidence. Yet, sacramental meals are portrayed as offering some kind of communion, or destruction. In such meals, good eating is associated with holiness, bad eating with idolatry. The foundations in Paul are similar, but the idea of

idolatry is played down in this passage. Paul does, however, use ἴδιον and κυριακὸν, based on the principles of holiness and justice, to differentiate good and bad eating (above, p. 376, ¶ 8.3.1.1.). Both *Jos.Asen.* and 1 Cor share a common framework in which eating habits, as an issue of holiness, lead to beneficial or destructive consequences for the participants in ritual. However, this pattern is stronger in 1 Cor 10, where the eucharist is contrasted with pagan ritual meals.

Here Paul's thinking predicates different results from the eating of the Christian meal: the mode of participation, rather than the meal itself, is the deciding factor. However, such thinking, in which a substance or element may be either damaging or effective, fits with the wider socio-historical phenomena. Paul appears to be adapting sacramental thinking and using a common idea from his environment to give advice about the way in which Christian ritual should be celebrated. Whilst φάρμακον/φαρμακεία might suggest associations with ancient magic, there are significant differences in conceptuality which warn against such an identification. The presence of sacramental ideas within Judaism of the Second Temple period, presumably acceptable to Jewish theologians such as Paul, would seem to provide a better source of material for the development of Christian thinking than alien, and even irrelevant, religious traditions of dubious worth.

8.5.3.1. Destruction

Paul describes the damage which results from improper eating using a string of adjectives. These describe what has happened to members of the congregation. They have become weak and ill; some have died (ἀσθενεῖς καὶ ἄρρωστοι καὶ κοιμῶνται ἰκανοί-11:30). Are these afflictions metaphorical or literal? Schneider argues that they are primarily metaphorical and denote a dead faith (1996, 3-19; cf. Thiselton 2000, 894). Yet bad eating habits, based on the hierarchical Roman pattern, might literally cause these ailments: over-indulgence does have physical consequences. Schneider's thesis appears to demand a separation of the metaphorical and the literal. Such a distinction is anachronistic given that spiritual or supernatural causes might explain illness (Barrett 1971, 275). Within contemporary thinking it would have made perfect

sense for there to be physical consequences for spiritual errors: this also may rule out magical explanations (Thiselton 2000, 896).

Along with this comes a second question: whether such ailments have an eschatological dimension or not?

8.5.3.2. Judgement

The place of judgement among the consequences of eating, of course, makes reference to the earlier question of discernment. The self-judgement that takes place (ἐαυτοῦς- 11:31) is connected to the discernment of the body, but is not limited to discerning the community. It points to the way in which participants in the meal have to recognise their identification with Christ.

Is such judgement ethical or eschatological? In the short term, the whole point of Paul's writing is to correct the behaviour of the Corinthians: to that extent it has an ethical dimension. If this is not to be futile exercise, it presumes that they do not stand under final condemnation for what they have done: there is room for change. This much is further supported by 11:32 in which judgement (κρινόμενοι) has an educative role (παιδευόμεθα) which allows the right acting participant to escape judgement (ἵνα μὴ σὺν τῷ κόσμῳ κατακριθῶμεν- cf. Hering 1962, 121). However, such a pattern does not preclude an eschatological dimension. The ethical thrust of Paul's writing gives an opportunity to ensure that eschatological blessings are not lost. Bad eating may cause a loss of eschatological blessings as happened to the Israelites in the wilderness. This also addresses the wider criticism of "over-realised" eschatology in the Corinthian correspondence (below, p. 371, fn. 12). However, there is really no need to choose between ethics and eschatology: the two are linked.

The eschatological pattern contains ideas associated elsewhere with food and symbolism: the holy food of *JosAsen.* was associated with manna, the food given to the Israelites in the wilderness, and served to symbolise that the convert was transformed into a new creation. This again appears to be an example of *bricolage*, in which a number of symbols are combined to form a novel theological construct. Yet this is not a complete novelty, for it involves associations already apparent elsewhere within Second Temple Judaism.

This positive outcome is then reinforced by practical advice about hospitality when conducting their rituals, in which the satisfaction of hunger and thirst are to be considered the primary end of the meal: it is better that this be done by eating at home rather than corrupting the ritual meal. Particular attention should be given to the way in which people are treated: they need to welcome one another (ἀλλήλους ἐκδέχεσθε) in such a way that no one loses status by being overlooked, or left out. It is a practical manifestation of concerns which arise elsewhere, namely, that cultural or social differences should not be used to grade the value of particular members of the church²⁰.

8.6. Conclusions

In 1 Cor 11:17-34, Paul's excursus on the Lord's Supper engages with a number of issues which arise within the Corinthian context. Divisions have arisen because of controversy over eating habits which have led to the exclusion of some church members. They appear to have lost status as a result of these practices. The critique of more specifically Roman culture is seen in the criticism of eating patterns which would appear to be associated with the Roman *convivium*, in which guests were accorded privileges and status according to rank. Such criticisms may further imply an attack on religious practices associated with Graeco-Roman meals. This common background reflects the meal traditions of the time, including those of guilds and sodalities, which Paul wishes to redress.

Paul's response is not merely to suggest a new kind of meal in which all share fairly. He does not argue for a pattern of eating which will alleviate hunger. Nor does he use arguments familiar from Greek or Roman contexts. The ritual which he envisions is not a mere remembrance, symbolism or illustration of fellowship, it gains a particular significance from Paul's concept of the "Body" (Moffatt 1938, 170) and the example given by Jesus (Henderson 2002, 200).

Paul draws attention to the two significant gestures Jesus made with the bread (a high status food) and cup on the night of his handing over. Paul's excursus on this theme includes teaching about the ethical and eschatological

consequences of failing to discern the Body of Christ in the communal ritual: such discernment has both a “vertical” and a “horizontal” dimension.

In his argument, Paul engages with a meal practice which appears to have been corrupted by two factors in particular: the practice of ranking at meals, and the Graeco-Roman sacramental practice and theory in which such rites function *ex opere operato*. In response he posits a meal in which all share equally. He further suggests a reform of sacramental thinking using Judaic sacramentalism (*donno data*) which contains an ethical imperative for those who participate in the ritual meal. Paul thus engages in a cross-cultural sacramental debate by stressing the superiority of Judaic sacramentalism over Graeco-Roman practice.

This is not the only manifestation of this kind of strategy. It appears also in Paul’s speech on the Areopagus (Acts 17:16-31). There Paul is portrayed as correcting Graeco-Roman thought by reference to Judaic tradition (Torkki 2004, 155-75), as well as quotations from Graeco-Roman authorities, which act as bridges between the two world views (Flemming 2002, 202; 203-5)²¹.

Whilst scholars have attempted to show connections of his thinking to the Mystery Religions, it appears that Paul’s strong connection of ritual and ethics shows a different provenance, as does his linking of ritual to a historical, rather than legendary, narrative. Motifs used to suggest a Mystery influence rather share resemblances with Jewish thinking, specifically in ideas associated with sacramentals, particularly in evidence within *Jos.Asen.* and traditions of that type, and the “extension of personality”. Moffatt would place the ritual within the pattern of *Haggadah*, an enacted declaration of faith and fellowship (1938, 170). The combination of ritual activity, ethics and judgment, also discernible in that context, seems to confirm such similarities. To this mix is added an eschatological dimension, echoing not only the traditions of Israel in the wilderness, but the conjunction of food, symbol and eschatology found in *Jos.Asen.*

Such conclusions need not be surprising, given Paul’s established Jewish credentials. They also have the merit of providing an organic dimension to the development of Paul’s thinking rather than the disjunction which might be

demanded should such ideas be considered to come from the Mysteries or pagan thought.

With regard to inculturation, Paul engages in a mode of inculturation which uses elements from the receiving culture (meal practices, issues of status, and sacramentalism), but subjects them to a critique from the faith-event of Jesus Christ (mediated through the tradition recorded in 11:23-25) which is being inculturated. However, his excursus on fitting meal practice includes elements which are not recorded in that tradition, particularly from Jewish sacramentalism which are also imported as correctives to the behaviour which Paul considers abusive. These last items might be identified as the emergence of what Shorter has called the “Christian patrimony”. This last point ought to be stressed, for the admission that the patrimony contains Jewish elements, is not always driven by Graeco-Roman influences, and may even be critical of them, is valuable in breaking down the hegemony that Graeco-Roman thought has sometimes been accorded within theology driven by a classicist ideology.

Notes

1 It is possible that references to sexual morality in 1 Cor 10:7-14 might refer to the sexual mores of Graeco-Roman meals. The overlap between sexual and religious politics may be seen in 10:4 and 8. However, this need not imply participation in cult prostitution, as accounts of this practice in Roman Corinth appear to have been exaggerated (Fotopoulos 2003, 173-4; 178).

2 Collins (1999, 421) argues that such an identification can be made. Hering (1962, 113) also takes a contrary view, implying that the lack of detail here is due to the account already given in Ch. 1.

3 Paul's other description of the results of bad practice, contempt for the church (τῆς ἐκκλησίας τοῦ θεοῦ καταφρονεῖτε) suggests not disdain for a particular group or faction, but for the community as a whole. It is difficult to see how this would work if based on economics alone.

For an exploration of shame as a cultural force in Roman culture, see Kaster 1997, 3-9; Witherington 1994, 154-5. Shame was not perceived as a universal feeling, and was itself stratified: adult elite males were thought to have the highest sense of shame, and people were marginalised on the basis of status and gender (Kaster 1997, 10).

4 Meggitt's *Paul, Poverty and Survival* has triggered a debate in which the "new consensus" about the presence of rich and poor in the Corinthian congregation has been re-examined. See further, Martin (2001b), Meggitt (2001) and Theissen (2001; 2003). This intricate debate is noted, but its conclusions are not so far removed from the evidence here to cause a re-evaluation of the thread of our argument. Theissen's revised findings are basically in tune with his earlier thinking, but in a more refined form. Meggitt's claim that there were not "rich" members of the congregation is not convincing, as it appears to polarise Graeco-Roman society into a tiny rich and vast small element. Theissen's more nuanced approach appears more realistic.

5 Some suggest that the use of προλαμβάνει implies a further twist, implying a rush by some to eat because there are food shortages (Thiselton 2000, 863; on shortages, 852-3).

6 Nor indeed is it suitable for all societies in the late twentieth and early twenty first centuries. Julius Nyerere criticised the assumption that Western socialism provided a universal paradigm (Nkemnkia 1999, 50-6). Elsewhere, Nyerere stressed the need for reform which is not just economic, but also social and political: society should not be reduced to economics (Nyerere 1997, 113-4).

7 Rawson (1966) gives an insight onto the complexities of status depending on the circumstances of birth as either slave or free.

8

Acilianus himself possesses an abundance of energy and diligence, combined with the greatest modesty. He has already passed very creditably through the offices of quaestor, tribune, and praetor and has thus already spared you the necessity of campaigning for him. He has the countenance of a gentleman, a very healthy and ruddy complexion, an aristocratic attractiveness in his whole body, and a certain senatorial elegance. These are features which I think should not be overlooked, for this, a bridegroom's good looks, ought to be given to a girl as a reward for her chastity.

I don't know whether I should add that his father has substantial wealth. When I consider the priorities of you, for whom I am seeking an in-law, I suspect that I should leave his wealth unmentioned.

(Pliny the Younger, *Letters*, 1.14 from Shelton 1988, 39)

9 Issues of power may also be involved. Horrell apparently explores such themes in the idol-meal controversy but does not refer to the potentially lethal effects of bad eating of the community meal (Hurd 2000), but I have not been able to gain access to this material. Issues of power intrude in some readings of the idol-meats controversy:

Moreover, the freedom of the Corinthians seems to be deliberately dubbed "[This character cannot be represented into ASCII text.], "power." This looks like a sarcastic exaggeration. Three indications support this view. (1) In the preceding part of the letter Paul has already sarcastically exposed "the royal dignity, the wisdom, might and honour" of the Corinthians (1 Cor 4:6-13); therefore, when he speaks now of "your power," suspicion is called for. (2) Paul has already reproached the Corinthians more than once for being "puffed up" (1 Cor 4:6,18,19; 5:2; 8:1). Particularly 1 Cor 8:1-3, the verses he elaborates here, are important: knowledge puffs up, and it is often only presumed knowledge. The term "[This character cannot be represented into ASCII text.]" connotes Paul's verdict that the Corinthians are "puffed up" and that they have awarded this "presumed" power to themselves.

(Smit 1997, from html document on EBSCO)

Status, wealth and power are all interlinked. It would not be unreasonable to consider the ritual meal controversy to be also an abuse of power or privilege (status).

10 For analysis of gestures concerning the bread and cup see Ch.6, pp. 278-93, ¶ 6.6. -7.. For interpretations of the words connected to each element, see Ch.7, pp. 305-38, ¶ 7.2.-3..

11 Such a reading is very different from Henderson (2002) which would play down either a sacramental or ritual dimension to the meal.

12 This theme is also addressed in 1 Cor 1:7 (Barrett 1971, 39; Hering 1962,3; Thiselton 2000, 98-106) and 4:8 (Barrett 1971, 109; Hering 1962, 29; Thiselton 2000, 357-9). It is also seen in the argument of 1 Cor 10:1-4 which would encourage the Corinthians to identify themselves with Israel in the wilderness.

13 This stress on equality is found elsewhere. The most famous example occurs in Gal 3:28. Such remarks must however be interpreted in the context of ancient views of equality and identity, not modern (Stowers 1998, 298-9).

14 Hering (1962, 119) would also see 11:25 at the end of the quoted tradition. So does Thiselton (2000, 886) when he describes 11:23-5 as the pre-Pauline tradition.

15 Criticism of this theory does not mean that the whole concept of "reminding-God" need be put aside, only the demand that the celebration of the eucharist brings about the consummation of the Kingdom. It still remains perfectly feasible that the ritual "reminds" God of the needs of those making the offering. Such terminology primarily indicates a unity of purpose or relationship, rather than lobbying for a specific action to take place.

16 Shogren 2000, an exegesis of Rom 14:17, also addresses the question of "right eating". However, whilst Henderson's focus is on "right eating", Shogren's analysis suggests that Paul wishes the Romans to see that wrangling over eating is symptomatic of a wider malaise which should rather be addressed.

17 This pattern has been described, though not with direct reference to sacramentals, in Hengel 1991b, 37-9; 61-2; 85-6. Hengel pictures Paul's zeal for the law being replaced by a zeal for the gospel of grace.

18 Hering distinguishes realistic, symbolic, significative, mystical or ethical meanings. This writer would see these subsumed under the heading of sacramental. The relationships between symbol, sign, realism and mysticism have been seen to coalesce under the term "sacramentalism" particularly in the examination of blood in Ch.7, pp.331-3, ¶ 7.3.5.. This chapter has highlighted the ethical dimension.

19 Such thinking may have been held in common with the Corinthians. Paul's criticism of the Corinthians' failure to "discern the body" need not imply that he is criticising a lack of sacramental understanding on their part (cf. p. 375, ¶ 8.2.3.). Failure to discern the body could equally indicate a shared sacramental understanding. Paul would be reminding the Corinthians that their practice was logically incompatible with their understanding of the meal rather than correcting a non-sacramental understanding.

20 In Rom 15, the argument involves the "strong" and the "weak". Earlier in that letter, the relative status, or lack of it, between Jew and Gentile has surfaced, and all have been reminded that their Christian status comes from Christ and grace, not ethnicity. The classic formulation of such thinking is found in Gal 3:27, where the question of ethnicity and ethics has been addressed in Paul's remarks about the Jewish-Gentile controversy triggered there by Peter's table manners.

21 Trokki's study makes it clear that there had already been interplay between Judaic and Graeco-Roman conceptualities in the Second Temple period.

This interpretation of Acts 17 would square with that of Haenchen 1971, 522-31. Scholars vary in the degree of authority which they consider Paul gives to pagan sources. Haenchen would see them given equal status with Jewish sources in other speeches (525), a claim disputed by Bruce 1987, 74.

Here only the similarity of the strategies is noted. No attempt is made here to address the vexed question of the historicity of the depiction given of Paul in Acts. For materials on this wider topic see, *inter alia*, Barrett 2002, 265-6; Haenchen 1971, 112-6; Kümmel 1984, 181-4; Lentz 1993; Meeks 1983, 26; 28; 61-2; Moffatt 1933, 300-2; Neyrey 1996c; Robinson 1976, 87-9 and Roloff 1979.