

# **THE HOUSE CHURCH AT CORINTH AND THE LORD'S SUPPER: FAMINE, FOOD SUPPLY, AND THE PRESENT DISTRESS \***

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## *Introduction*

Food figures prominently in 1 Corinthians. This should not come as a surprise, since food and related concerns (e.g., commensality) are predominant in many other NT texts. In addition, it was an important issue in the Jewish communities; so important, that many of the synagogue complexes included cooking and dining facilities. In some instances, the Jewish community gathered in a renovated house (i.e., house synagogue), in which case the facilities were already present. And in the nondomestic setting, facilities were sometimes introduced.<sup>1</sup>

Food and meals were also important concerns to the non-Jews in the Greco-Roman world.<sup>2</sup> In particular, as in the Jewish communities,

\* For John McRay, with sincere appreciation.

<sup>1</sup> The most helpful collections for synagogue complexes are offered by L M. White, *The Christian Domus Ecclesiae and Its Environment: A Collection of Texts and Monuments* (HTS 36; Minneapolis: Fortress, forthcoming) and A T. Kraabel, "The Diaspora Synagogue: Archaeological and Epigraphic Evidence since Sukenik," *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* 2.19.1 (1979) 477-510. Evaluations of the material include: L M. White, *Building God's House in the Roman World. Architectural Adaptation among Pagans, Jews, and Christians* (The ASOR Library of Biblical and Near Eastern Archaeology; Baltimore/London: Johns Hopkins, 1990) 60-111 and B. B. Blue, *In Public and In Private: The Role of the House Church in Early Christianity* (IVP, forthcoming).

<sup>2</sup> D. E. Smith, "Meals and Morality in Paul and His World," *SBLASP* (1981) 319-39; "Table Fellowship as a Literary Motif in the Gospel of Luke," *JBL* 106 (1987) 613-38,

food and meals are prominent features in various associations and religious/cultic groups.<sup>3</sup> This fact is seen in 1 Cor 8:10 with the reference to being "at table in an idol's temple." It was not uncommon for a temple to include culinary appurtenances and accommodate common meals. In addition to literature from this period<sup>4</sup> and the archaeological evidence from Corinth and elsewhere,<sup>5</sup> the papyri attest to invitations to religious meals at temples as well as in houses.<sup>6</sup> One example will illustrate the phenomenon of religious meals and their setting in the Greco-Roman world: the cult of Sarapis.

The remains of an inscription on Delos records the dedication (on a column) of a temple to Sarapis by Apollonius II.<sup>7</sup> The inscription,

and *Social Obligation in the Context of Communal Meals: A Study of the Christian Meal in 1 Corinthians in Comparison with Graeco-Roman Meals* (unpublished ThD. dissertation, Harvard Divinity School, 1980).

<sup>3</sup> A catalogue of material has been assembled by H.-J. Klauck in his 1980 dissertation (Catholic Theological Faculty, Ludwig-Maximilian University in Munich). This was later published as *Herrenmahl und hellenistischer Kult. Eine religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung zum ersten Korintherbrief* (NTAbh [NF] 15; Munster: Aschendorff, 1981). A second edition appeared in 1982.

<sup>4</sup> Philostratus, for example, writes that Ptolemy of Naucratis had a brilliant reputation among the sophists: "For he was one of those who were admitted to dine at the public expense in the temple of Naucratis, an honour paid to few of her citizens" (*Lives of the Sophists* 595 [LCL Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press/London: William Heinemann, 1968]). Like other public buildings, the banquetting halls (in the temples) were donated by benefactors. See for example the banquet hall in the temple of Artemis at Ephesus which was part of a gift from Damianus (the sophist), dedicated to himself (Philostratus, *Lives of the Sophists* 605).

<sup>5</sup> A good example can be seen in the sanctuary of Asclepius at Corinth. The precincts included dining rooms beneath the Abaton which accommodated meals G. Wiseman, "Corinth and Rome: 228 B.C.-A.D. 267," *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* 2.7.1 (1979) 487, 510; cf. J. Murphy-O'Connor, *St Paul's Corinth. Texts and Archaeology* (Good News Studies 6; Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1983) 161-67, figs. 9 and 10. The earlier sanctuary of Demeter-Core at Acrocorinth (6th-2d century B.C.) included some 40 dining rooms (accommodating seven-ten diners each). For this evidence see the literature cited in "Invitations to the Kline of Sarapis," *New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity. A Review of the Greek Inscriptions and Papyri published in 1976* (Macquarie University: The Ancient History Documentary Research Centre, 1981) 21:5-9. One recent study is concerned with this question: E. Will, "Banquets et salles de banquet dans les cultes de la Grece et de l'Empire romain," *Melanges d'histoire ancienne et d'archeologie offerts a Paul Collart* (ed. P. Ducrey; Cahiers d'archeologie romande 5; Lusanne: Bibliotheque historique vaudoise, 1976) 353-62. For a general discussion of the function of the Roman temples see J. E. Stambaugh, "The Function of Roman Temples," *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* 2.16.1 (1978) 554-608. See the examples and literature cited in R MacMullen, *Paganism in the Roman Empire* (London/New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981) 36.

<sup>6</sup> C.-H. Kim has produced a satisfying (although not exhaustive) collection in his study "The Papyrus Invitation," *JBL* 94 (1975) 391-402.

<sup>7</sup> The report appeared in full in 1975: H. Engelmann, *The Delian Aretalogy of Sarapis* (Etudes preliminaires aux religions orientales dans l'empire romain 44; Leiden: E. J.

dated to the late 3d century B.C., records that Apollonius received a nocturnal vision in a dream in which he was encouraged not to prolong the despondency of his ancestors who ignored the god; rather, he was to build a temple so that Sarapis would no longer have to live "in a rented room" (ἐν μισθωτοῖς). Despite opposition, Apollonius fulfilled the summons, and the project was completed in six months. The Sarapeion included a dining hall (40 sq. m.), marble seats, and couches.

In addition to this epigraphic evidence, the papyri are full of invitations to a dinner at the table of the lord Sarapis.<sup>8</sup> The occasions for these dinners in the Sarapeion were wide ranging, including birthday parties.<sup>9</sup> What is most striking, however, are the references to dining "at the table of the lord Sarapis" in places other than the Sarapeion,<sup>10</sup> and in particular the references to the meals in the homes belonging to individuals.<sup>11</sup> It is not inconceivable that the Sarapeion could in fact be a

Brill); cf. A. D. Nock, *Conversion: The Old and the New in Religion from Alexander the Great to Augustine of Hippo* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1933) 50-53 and most recently R. M. Grant, *Gods and the One God* (Library of Early Christianity; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986) 38-39. J. E. Stambaugh has provided a good overview of the history and development of this cult group in his *The Sarapis under the Early Ptolemies* (Etudes préliminaires aux religions orientales dans l'empire romain 25; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1972).

<sup>8</sup> *P. Oxy* 110 (2d century A.D.): Invitation to a dinner at the table of the lord Sarapis in the Sarapeion (δειπνήσαι εἰς κλείνην τοῦ κυρίου Σαράπιδος ἐν τῷ Σαραπέῳ. Κλείνην appears to be a technical term (roughly equivalent to ἱέρωμα in the Isis cult, cf. *P. Fouad* 76), cf. Kim, "The Papyrus Invitation," 395; H. C. Youtie, "The Kline of Sarapis," *HTR* 41 (1948) 9-29; L. Koenen, "Eine Einladung zur Kline des Sarapis (*P. Colon* inv. 2555)," *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 1 (1967) 121-26. *P. Oxy* 2592 is similar while 1485 is an invitation to dine at the temple of Demeter.

<sup>9</sup> *P. Oxy* 2791: "Diogenes invites you to dinner for the first birthday of his daughter in the Sarapeion tomorrow " This is not to suggest that all birthday celebrations were held in the Sarapeion or other temples. Most of the common celebrations took place in the home. One of the most common invitations sent was for the marriage celebration (which often included a meal), cf. *P. Oxy* 111, 524, 1579 (all listed, along with others, in Kim, "The Papyrus Invitation").

<sup>10</sup> *P. Oxy* 1484: "Apollonius requests you to dine at the table of the lord Sarapis on the occasion of the approaching coming of age of his brothers at the temple of Thoeris. . . ."

<sup>11</sup> This has not gone unnoticed. Cf. Klauck, *Herrenmahl und hellenistischer Kult*, 134-36; idem, *Hausgemeinde und Hauskirche im fruhen Christentum* (SBS 103; Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1981) 88-89. (A revision of this work appeared later as "Hausgemeinde und Hauskirche im fruhen Christentum," *Theologisches Jahrbuch* 1985 led. W. Ernst et al.; Leipzig: St. Benno, 1985) 144-213. We will refer to the earlier SBS publication). Kim, "The Papyrus Invitation"; cf. "Invitations to the Kline of Sarapis," *New Docs* 1976 (1981) 21:5-9. Nonetheless, a few examples are instructive: *P. Oxy* 523 (2d century A.D.) Invitation to a dinner at the table of the lord Sarapis in the house of Claudius Sarapion (δειπνήσ(αι) παρ' αὐτῷ εἰς κλείνην τοῦ κυρίου Σαράπιδος ἐν τοῖς Κλαυδ[ίου] Σαραπίω[νος] . . .).

house<sup>12</sup> (converted or otherwise).<sup>13</sup> A house may be envisioned in the Delian Aretalogy (i.e., rented quarters—*ἐν μισθωτοῖς*). Keeping this in mind, Paul may very well have been referring to religious meals in 1 Cor 10:27 as well as in 8:10. In 8:10, it is clear that a temple proper is the venue. In chap. 10, the matter is not quite so clear. Given the evidence, we should not rule out the possibility that Paul is referring to religious meals in a private home. If the meal was not religious, it was more likely than not that the meat would have been part of a pagan sacrifice (cf. 10:28), particularly since meat was usually only available on the occasion of sacrifices.<sup>14</sup>

This preliminary overview allows us to turn to the Corinthian correspondence. Unfortunately, we cannot take up all the questions concerning food/invitations and religious associations at Corinth. Our task is more modest and our question more restricted: we will only take up the question of the difficulties at the table and Paul's injunction in 1 Cor 11:17-34. We begin with three assumptions: 1. Like many other religious groups, the Christians gathered in a house. 2. Like other groups,

*P. Oslo* 3.157 (2d century A.D.F Invitation (from Sarapion the *gymnasiarch*) to a dinner at the table of the lord Sarapis in his own house (δειπνήσ[αι] εἰς κλείνην τοῦ κυρίου Σ[αράπιδος] ἐν τῇ ἰδίῳ οἰκίᾳ . . . ).

*P. Yale* 85 (2d century A.D.F Invitation (from Dionysios) to dine on the 21st at the *kline* of Helios, great Serapis, at the Ninth hour, in the house of his father (δειπνήσαι τῇ κα εἰς κλείνην Ἡλίου μεγάλου Σαράπιδος . . . πατρικῆι ἑαυτοῦ οἰκίᾳ).

A fourth possibility is in *P. Oxy* 1755 (second or early 3d century A.D.): Invitation to dinner at the table of the lord Sarapis in the house of Sarapion (Ἐρωτᾶ σε Ἀπίων δειπνήσαι ἐν τῷ οἴκῳ τοῦ Σαραπίου εἰς κλείνην τοῦ κυρίου Σαράπιδος . . . ). As Grenfell *et al.*, comment: "It is not clear whether the οἶκος was Apion's [the host's] own house, in which case ἐπί may be supplied before τοῦ Σαραπίου, or was a part of the temple itself; cf. ἐν τῷ Σαραπίῳ in [*P. Oxy.*] 110.3." Similar invitations to religious banquets in private homes could be included at this point, e.g., for the devotees of Isis in *P. Fouad* 76 (2d century A.D.F Invitation (from Sarapous) to a dinner in his house (δειπνήσαι εἰς ἱέρωμα τῆς κυρίας Ἰσιδος ἐν τῇ οἰκίᾳ).

<sup>12</sup> In addition to the literature cited above, see J. E. Stambaugh and D. L. Balch, *The New Testament in Its Social Environment* (Library of Early Christianity; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986) 43.

<sup>13</sup> It is not inconceivable, however, that the houses belonging to the Delian supporters were too small for such a gathering although the dining hall in the new Sarapeion would not have accommodated a large crowd. It must be remembered that whatever location was chosen, accommodation was needed for the sacrifice and meal (cf. "Invitations to the Kline of Sarapis," *New Docs* 1976 (1981) 21:6.

<sup>14</sup> Smith, *Social Obligation*, 12; G. Theissen, *The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity: Essays on Corinth* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982) 155-63; Murphy-O'Connor, *St. Paul's Corinth*, 101, 161-67.

the Christians partook of a common meal<sup>15</sup> in the house. 3. Given the at Corinth, the importance of meals taken in a religious context his lengthy stay at Corinth (18 months),<sup>16</sup> Paul would have certainly addressed the question of proper procedure and protocol at the table. That this was the case is seen in Paul's own words in 11:2; i.e., Paul's commendation that the Corinthians maintain the traditions.

If 11:2 serves as more than sarcasm<sup>17</sup> or literary device,<sup>18</sup> but as a *captatio benevolentiae* to introduce the issues taken up in 11-14,<sup>19</sup> we must seriously consider whether the "deviations" addressed in 11-14 (specifically 11:17-34) are deliberate, or whether recent events (unparalleled during Paul's visit) have raised new problems which Paul must address in absentia. If this is indeed the case, alternative solutions must be found which answer the question: Why so much attention to such a fundamental and important issue? In the case of 11:17-34, the syntax suggests that new circumstances have been introduced at Corinth which affected the Christian gathering and, in particular, the meal.

### *The Language of Gathering*

The vivid language of gathering in 1 Cor 11:17-34 includes the use of *συνέρχονται* five times. In this passage Paul does not commend

<sup>15</sup> Tertullian's comments are most instructive: "The Salii cannot have their feast without going into debt; you must get the accountants to tell you what the tenths of Hercules and the sacrificial banquets cost; the choicest cook is appointed for the Apaturia, the Dionysia, the Attic mysteries; the smoke from the banquet of Sarapis will call out the fireman. Yet about the modest supper-room of the Christians alone a great ado is made" (*Apology* 39, ANF 3).

<sup>16</sup> Murphy-O'Connor dates Paul's arrival to A.D. 49 and his departure to A.D. 51 (*St. Paul's Corinth*, 139-40). So too M. Hengel, *Between Jesus and Paul: Studies in the Earliest History of Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983) 49. R. Jewett dates Paul's appearance before Gallio sometime during the twelve month period ending with July 1, A.D. 52 (*Dating Paul's Life* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979] 40; cf. G. Ludemann, *Paul, Apostle to the Gentiles. Studies in Chronology* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984] 2 and C. Herner, *The Book of Acts in the Setting of Hellenistic History* [WUNT 49; Tubingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1989] 255-56). Most recently, see J. McRay (*Archaeology and the New Testament* [Grand Rapids: Baker, forthcoming] who dates the tribunal episode to A.D. 51.

<sup>17</sup> So J. C. Hurd, *The Origin of 1 Corinthians* (London: SPCK, 1965) 182-82, citing support.

<sup>18</sup> So H. Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975) 182.

<sup>19</sup> G. D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987) 500.

<sup>20</sup> In 11:17, 18, 20, 33 and 34. The only other occurrences in the Pauline corpus come in 14:23, 26, and 7.5.

the Corinthian gathering for the community meal; rather, his grievances indicate that their meetings are more destructive than beneficial (οὐκ εἰς τὸ κρεῖσσον ἀλλὰ εἰς τὸ ἥσσον συνέρχεσθε; "when you come together it is not for the better but for the worse"). Apparently the abuse was sufficiently abhorrent that the divisions (σχίσματα, v 18) and factions (αἰρέσεις, v 19) rendered the meal as merely one of many and not the Lord's Supper (v 20). In this pericope Paul establishes three pairs of antithesis: 1. "house" contrasted with "house church," 2. κυριακὸν δεῖπνον ("the Lord's supper") with τὸ ἴδιον δεῖπνον ("one's own meal"), and 3. ἔχοντες ("those who have") with μὴ ἔχοντες ("those who do not have").

(18) πρῶτον μὲν γὰρ	ὥστε, ἀδελφοί μου, (33)
For, to begin with,	So then, my brothers and sisters
συνερχομένων ὑμῶν ἐν ἐκκλησίᾳ 1	
when you come together as the church	
ἀκούω σχίσματα ἐν ὑμῖν ὑπάρχειν	
I hear that there are divisions among you	
(20) συνερχομένων οὖν ὑμῶν ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτὸ	συνερχόμενοι εἰς τὸ φαγεῖν
when you come together	when you come together to eat
οὐκ ἔστιν κυριακὸν δεῖπνον φαγεῖν·	
it is not to eat the Lord's supper	
(21) ἕκαστος γὰρ τὸ ἴδιον δεῖπνον προλαμβάνει 2	ἀλλήλους ἐκδέχεσθε
ἐν τῷ φαγεῖν,	
when you eat, each of you goes ahead	share with one another
with your own supper	
καὶ ὃς μὲν πεινᾷ ὃς δὲ μεθύει	εἴ τις πεινᾷ (34)
and one goes hungry and another becomes	if anyone is hungry
drunk	
(22) μὴ γὰρ οἰκίας οὐκ ἔχετε	3 ἐν οἴκῳ
do you not have houses	at home
εἰς τὸ ἐσθίειν καὶ πίνειν;	ἐσθιέτω,
to eat and drink in?	eat
ἢ τῆς ἐκκλησίας τοῦ θεοῦ καταφρονεῖτε	ἵνα μὴ εἰς κρίμα συνέρχησθε
Or do you show contempt for the church	so that when you come together,
of God	it will not be for your condemnation
καὶ καταισχύνετε τοὺς μὴ ἔχοντας·	
and humiliate those who have nothing?	

*"House" as Residence and Church: (Re-)Defining Boundaries*

The first pair contrasts the οἶκος/οἰκία (house) and the ἐκκλησία ("church," i.e., "the meeting in the 'house'"). Paul describes the latter as: συνερχομένων ὑμῶν ἐν ἐκκλησίᾳ (assembling as a church, v 18), συνερχομένων οὖν ὑμῶν ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτό (assembling as the community,

v 20)<sup>21</sup> and *συνερχόμενοι εἰς τὸ φαγεῖν* (assembling to eat, v 33). Here, Paul's emphasis is on defining what is appropriate and inappropriate when the various house churches (*ἢ κατ' οἶκον ἐκκλησία*) gather in one house:<sup>22</sup> behavior which may be acceptable in the house (*οἶκος/οἰκία*, vv 22, 34) is not appropriate for the "church" (*ἐκκλησία*) when gathered in the house.<sup>23</sup> The very fact that the believers met in a private house forces Paul to avoid using house, i.e., *οἶκος/οἰκία*, as a designation for assembled believers in favor of participial clauses which effectively mean: when all of you are gathered together in a given house as the church.

*"Those Who Have" and "Those Without"*

The third pairing contrasts those who have and those who are lacking: one is hungry, another drunk (*ὃς μὲν πεινᾷ ὃς δὲ μεθύει*); some have houses, others have nothing (*οἰκίας ἔχοντες, μὴ ἔχοντες*). On the one hand there are believers who have plenty of food and drink while others have an insufficient quantity (and quality?) and are hungry. The stark difference between these two groups is seen at the table. To further accentuate the difference, those belonging to the advantaged group have houses to which Paul relegates their detestable behavior, while the second group are without (food and, perhaps, houses).<sup>24</sup>

<sup>21</sup> According to B. Metzger this phrase (*ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτό*) "which is common enough in classical Greek and the Septuagint, acquired a quasi-technical meaning in the early church. This meaning, which is required in Acts 1:15; 2:1, 3:1, 47; 1 Cor 11:20; 14:23, signifies the union of the Christian body, and perhaps could be rendered 'in church fellowship'" (*A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* [London: United Bible Societies, 1971] 305). This rendering is supported by M. Wilcox (*The Semitisms of Acts* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1965] 95); however, Wilcox seems to allow that it may mean "in church" (94,98). In his opinion, the expression is a Hebraism and may carry with it the idea of (joining/belonging to) the community/congregation, similar to the Qumran idiom *לִיְהוָה לִיְהוָה*; cf. M. Black, *An Aramaic Approach to the Gospels and Acts* (3d ed.; Oxford: Clarendon, 1967) 10-11 and E. Ferguson, "When You Come Together: *Epi to Auto* in Early Christian Literature," *Restoration Quarterly* 16 (1973) 202-8.

<sup>22</sup> The construction *ἢ κατ' οἶκον ἐκκλησία*, 'die sich hausweise konstituierende Kirche' (Klauck, *Hausgemeinde und Hauskirche*, 21) occurs four times in the NT: 1 Cor 16:19; Rom 16:5; Phlm 2; Col 4:15. Like the phrase *ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτό* this phrase denotes a gathering in the confines of a private house. The construction *ἐκκλησία ὅλη* depicts the gathering of the believers in one house. At Corinth, Gaius was one such host (Rom 16:23).

<sup>23</sup> It may very well be that the behavior which Paul relegates to the *οἶκος* is equally unacceptable in that context and must be addressed at a later time (cf. v 34). His present concern, however, is to intervene so that what has been/may be acceptable in the *οἶκος* is not promulgated in the house gatherings.

<sup>24</sup> Although it is not explicitly stated that those who are lacking are without "houses," the group which "is lacking" the food for the meal (see below) is likely the

G. Theissen has recently addressed the attendant social conditions of the Corinthian community and has convincingly demonstrated that at the socioeconomic level the early believers, unlike many of the contemporaneous associations, were not a homogeneous group; rather, early Christianity as reflected in the Corinthian correspondence displays "a marked internal stratification."<sup>25</sup> This diversity promoted certain difficulties in the meal context. In addition to enjoying better food as well as greater quantities,<sup>26</sup> it is conceivable that because the host would have been a wealthy member of the community,

same group who lacked the houses of plenty. Although we are uncertain of the proportion of *insulae* to detached, the former outnumbered the later by a considerable number. It is likely that during our period, the *domus* accounted for approximately three percent (the rest *insulae*) while claiming one third of the residential space. Cf. J. E. Packer, "Housing and Population in Imperial Ostia and Rome," *JRS* 57 (1967) 80-95; R. MacMullen, *Roman Social Relations: 50 B.C. to A.D. 284* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974) 62-63; Carcopino, *Daily Life in Ancient Rome* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959) 23-24; K. H. Beebe, "Domestic Architecture and the New Testament," *BA* 38 (1975) 96-97, and most recently P. Garnsey and R. P. Saller, *The Roman Empire: Economy, Society and Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987) and J. E. Stambaugh, *The Ancient Roman City* (Ancient Society and History; Baltimore/London: Johns Hopkins, 1988).

<sup>25</sup> G. Theissen, *The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity: Essays on Corinth* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982) 145-74; 69-120; cf. E. A. Judge, *The Social Pattern of Christian Groups in the First Century: Some Prolegomena to the Study of the New Testament Ideas of Social Obligation* (London: Tyndale, 1960) 60-62. In addition to the literature cited one further point needs mention: for the most part, societies and associations included people who (even though they might only be guests) could afford the provisions for the festivities (cf. *P. Teb* 118-late 2d century B.C.). Furthermore, an initiation fee and maintenance costs would, in part, restrict membership. This, however, did not mean that the group was "purely" homogeneous. The constituents of the burial society at Lanuvium, for example, included slaves and masters. The voluntary society met once a month for business and more frequently for social and religious functions. The initiation fee was 100 sesterces, and each member was required to pay monthly dues. The four men chosen to be in charge of each feast were required to provide the dinners. Cf. the bylaws of a burial club (dedicated to Diana) in Lanuvium (136 A.D.) in *CIL 14.2112-Roman Civilization. Sourcebook II: The Empire* (trans. N. Lewis and M. Reinhold; New York: Harper & Row, 1966) 274-75, and K. Hopkins, *Death and Renewal* (Sociological Studies in Roman History 2; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983) 215. Theissen discusses this matter in *Social Setting*, 153-63, esp. n. 25. In addition we should add the example of the private house cult at Philadelphia (in Lydia). This house cult has been discussed in S. C. Barton and G. H. R. Horsley, "A Hellenistic Cult Group and the New Testament Churches," *IAC* 24 (1981) 7-41; cf. *Sylloge Inscriptionum Graecarum* (3d ed.; ed. W. Dittenberger) 985,

<sup>26</sup> Theissen, *Social Setting*, 153-63. "Differences in menu are a relatively timeless symbol of status and wealth, and those not so well off came face to face with their own social inferiority at a most basic level." *Ibid.*, 160.

He invited into the triclinium his closest friends among the believers, who would have been of the same social class. The rest could take their places in the atrium, where conditions were inferior. Those in the triclinium would have *reclined*. . . whereas those in the atrium were forced to *sit*.<sup>27</sup>

*The Communal Meal and Private Meals*

Given the discrepancy in the social makeup of the Corinthian community, Theissen interprets *προλαμβάνω* as a reference to wealthier Christians who began their private meal before the communal meal which was an integral part of the Eucharist.<sup>28</sup> According to his reconstruction, the wealthy add injury to insult by consuming larger and better quantities of food both prior to the inception of the Eucharist and during the sacred meal. Other scholars, who separate the communal meal from the Eucharist, also claim that the wealthy are able to arrive leisurely at their convenience and gorge themselves before the Eucharist.<sup>29</sup> For our study we are not so much concerned to determine whether the communal meal was introduced by the breaking of bread or whether the latter followed the meal and was a rite which was separated very early in the church. What is important is Paul's attitude toward the common meal as it relates to the Eucharist:

Paul in no way had in mind a fundamental and definitive separation of the common meal and the sacramental celebration, as it had been carried out from the beginning of the second century. Rather, for Paul meal and celebration still belong so closely together that he can maintain that the bad state of affairs in the common meal [part of the Eucharist or otherwise] makes the entire Lord's Supper illusory.<sup>30</sup>

Although Theissen does not deal with the corrective given by Paul (*ἀλλήλους ἐκδέχεσθε*, see below), he suggests that the *ἴδιον δέϊπνον*

<sup>27</sup> Murphy-O'Connor, *St. Paul's Corinth*, 159; cf. L Morris, *The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians: An Introduction and Commentary* (Tyndale New Testament Commentaries; rev. ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985) 157. In the Greek and Roman contexts only free citizens (including women during our period) reclined. To be sure, "the use of this custom promoted a consciousness of social ranking" (Smith, "Meals and Morality," 321). In 14:30 we have a reference to believers sitting (*καθῆσθαι*) during a meeting. Although it is difficult to establish that it was necessary for some (or all) to have done so during the meal, the large number of people may have necessitated the posture.

<sup>28</sup> Theissen, *Social Setting*, 151-53.

<sup>29</sup> G. Bornkamm, *Early Christian Experience* (New Testament Library; London: SCM, 1969) 127-28, 142; P. Neuenzeit, *Das Herrenmahl: Studien zur paulinischen Eucharistieauffassung* (SANT 1; Munich: Kosel, 1960) 71-72.

<sup>30</sup> Bornkamm, *Early Christian Experience*, 129; cf. I. H. Marshall, *Last Supper and Lord's Supper* (Didsbury Lectures, 1980; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980) 111.

is the meal which the individual Christians bring and that because others have no ἴδιον δείπνον not all contributed to the Lord's Supper (or, following Bornkamm et al., to the common meal) but that the wealthier Christians provided, for all ἐκ τῶν ἰδίων (i.e., "from their own").<sup>31</sup> Apparently, then, Paul's advice would be something like this: the wealthier Christians who arrive early should not begin eating a private meal which precedes the communal meal but should wait and thereby have more to contribute to those who have nothing. If the wealthy are insistent on gorging themselves, they should do so at home (in a private meal) but not at the Lord's Supper.<sup>32</sup> Theissen's interpretation is not avant-garde. Other scholars have offered a similar interpretation of this passage. To his credit, Theissen, unlike the majority of other commentators, has reconstructed a milieu which would explain the problem envisaged in 11:17-34.

B. Winter has offered an alternative reconstruction which, when considered in light of epigraphic evidence from Corinth, is more satisfying. According to Winter, προλαμβάνω is not a reference to the consumption of food by some prior to the arrival of others. Rather, he submits, during the communal meal (which he takes to be part of the Eucharist) certain Corinthians were "devouring" (προλαμβάνω) their own private meal while the latter were lacking (μὴ ἔχοντες).<sup>33</sup> Winter's proposal that προλαμβάνω carries this overtone (and does not retain the temporal sense) is supported by *Sylloge Inscriptionum Graecarum* (3d ed.) 1170 (in which the context is a meal scene in the temple of Asclepius at Epidaurus, 2d century A.D.). In the inscription, προλαμβάνω is found three times: τυρὸν καὶ ἄρτον προλαβεῖν ("eating cheese and bread," I. 7); κιτρίου προλαμβάνειν ("eating of the citron," II. 9-10); γάλα μετὰ μέλιτος προλαμβεῖν ("eating honey-milk," 1.15). The fact that in each case the verb carries the idea "to eat" is seen in the editors' suggestion that προλαμβάνω should be read προσλαμβάνω.<sup>34</sup> In this respect, both in SIG<sup>3</sup> 1170 and 1 Corinthians 11, the temporal force of the prefix πρό- is

<sup>31</sup> Theissen, *Social Setting*, 148. According to his scenario, the fact that some Christians can afford to have a private meal before the communal meal to which they contribute substantially is further confirmation of the wealth which some of the Corinthians possessed.

<sup>32</sup> Theissen envisages either a modest common meal or perhaps the simple elements of bread and wine (cf. *Social Setting*, 161).

<sup>33</sup> B. W. Winter, "The Lord's Supper at Corinth: An Alternative Reconstruction," *Reformed Theological Review* 37 (1978) 73-82. Others have taken note of Winter's contribution (cf. Fee, *First Corinthians*, 542; G. C. Nicholson, "Houses for Hospitality: 1 Cor 11:17-34," *Colloquium* 19 [1986] 1-6).

<sup>34</sup> As Winter indicates, there is weak textual attestation for προσλαμβάνω in 1 Cor 11:21 (cf. Acts 27:33, where "eating" is clearly the meaning).

lost.<sup>35</sup> Furthermore, given the severity of the problem at Corinth, it is possible that *πρό-* is affixed to strengthen the meaning of the verb.<sup>36</sup>

This unacceptable behavior takes place *ἐν τῷ φαγεῖν*, that is, during the meal/supper.<sup>37</sup> By way of contrast, Paul gives the injunction *ἀλλήλους ἐκδέξασθε*, that is, receive one another in the sense of sharing.<sup>38</sup>

From the vantage of the text itself, the greatest strength to Winter's proposal is the appropriateness of the corrective with respect to the indictment. It makes little sense to render *ἀλλήλους ἐκδέξασθε* as "wait for one another,"<sup>39</sup> even if the indictment was that some were arriving early. How would this alleviate the problem that there were those who had nothing? Rather, if the contrast is between those who devour and Paul's exhortation to share, the passage is intelligible. In addition, there are other merits to Winter's argument and evidence which supports his reconstruction which has largely gone unnoticed. We will begin our discussion with the question: who are the have nots? In turn, we will ask: what is it they lack and why?

### *Commensality and Social Classes*

Commensality was of central concern in the establishing of the early church. The conflicts in the early church included what groups

<sup>35</sup> This is brought forward in J. H. Moulton and G. Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament Illustrated from the Papyri and Other Non-Literary Sources* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1930; repro Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972) 542, and W. Bauer, W. F. Arndt, F. W. Gingrich, and F. Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (2d ed.; Chicago: University of Chicago, 1979) 708.

<sup>36</sup> See Winter, "Lord's Supper," 76 for examples.

<sup>37</sup> The aorist articular infinitive connotes that it was during the meal that each ate his own.

<sup>38</sup> Winter, "Lord's Supper," 79-80. Barrett suggests that Paul instructs them to wait for proper distribution (*The First Epistle to the Corinthians* [Black's New Testament Commentaries; 2d ed.; London: A. & C. Black, 1971] 276; cf. Fee, *First Corinthians*, 568). Theissen is close to this when he writes: "At home everybody may eat and drink in whatever way seems proper. . . . Within their own four walls they are to behave according to the norms of their social class, while at the Lord's Supper the norms of the congregation have absolute priority. Clearly this is a compromise. It would be much more consistent with the idea of community to demand that this 'private meal' be shared. Paul's compromise, which simply acknowledges the class-specific differences within the community while minimizing their manifestations, corresponds to the realities of a socially stratified congregation which must yield a certain preeminence to the rich—even contrary to their own intentions," *Social Setting*, 164.

<sup>39</sup> See, for example, Bornkamm, *Early Christian Experience*, 126; S. C. Barton, "Paul's Sense of Place: An Anthropological Approach to Community Formation in Corinth," *NTS* 32 (1986) 241; Smith, "Meals and Morality," 327; Murphy-O'Connor, *St. Paul's Corinth*, 161, and the majority of commentators.

could eat together and what sorts of food were acceptable (cf. Galatians 2; Acts 15). In 1 Cor 11:17-34, the issue is appropriate eating habits at the Lord's Supper (including the common meal) between social classes. The problem which Paul addresses in this pericope is not so much who can and cannot eat together, nor what sorts of food are acceptable (1 Corinthians 8). Rather, assuming that gathering of Jews and Gentiles had been established, it seems that further problems have developed. In this instance, the social stratification at Corinth evoked certain problems at the communal meal. The wealthy, as Bornkamm writes:

could confidently spend the time eating and drinking in table fellowship with family, friends and peers. Everyone can imagine the very understandable reasons which may have played the role there: the very human tendency to a sociability among one's own; antipathy for the embarrassment that comes when rich and poor, free and slave, sit bodily at one table—real table fellowship is something quite different from charity at a distance; the worry that the "atmosphere" for receiving the sacrament may be spoiled by such an embarrassing rubbing of elbows with the poor.<sup>40</sup>

S. Barton furthers Bornkamm's thesis.<sup>41</sup> He proposes that there were some members of the Christian community who consciously wanted to impose the patterns of private practice on the church. Since the church met in the house, it would have been natural, he argues, to collapse the boundaries (which were already thin by the very definition of church-in-house) so that the eating patterns and practices in the house church would be the same as in the confines of one's own *domus* (which in some cases would have been the same house!).

While this reconstruction is at first glance attractive, we must raise two objections. First, it seems questionable to assume that such a basic question as "whether or not all the believers should partake in the common meal together (especially if it was an integral part of the sacrament)?" would not have been addressed by Paul during his lengthy visit at Corinth. To be sure, Paul must have established a pattern of practice for the gathering community at Corinth, particularly a pattern for something as important as the Lord's Supper (including the communal meal). After all, he was there for some 18 months, and the issue of commensality had impressed itself from the start. Paul would have addressed the issue of the "rubbing of elbows."<sup>42</sup>

<sup>40</sup> Bornkamm, *Early Christian Experience*, 128.

<sup>41</sup> Barton, "Paul's Sense of Place," 235-36.

<sup>42</sup> This is not to say that all the issues concerning food (e.g., what sorts—1 Corinthians 8) or the distribution thereof (see below) had been answered. Rather, the funda-

Furthermore, to equate *μη ἔχοντες* ("those who lack") with the slaves or even freedmen who fell under the auspices of a householder is a misnomer. As E. A. Judge has observed: "the dependent members of city households were by no means the most debased section of society. If lacking freedom, they still enjoyed security, and a moderate prosperity."<sup>43</sup> This prompts us to ask two questions: 1. "If the slaves and freedmen who had the social security of a household are not the ones who are lacking, to whom is Paul referring?" and 2. "What recent development at Corinth precipitated the abuse which Paul addresses in 11:17-34, which seems to be a new problem not addressed previously?"

*Social Class: Security and Insecurity*

We propose that those who are lacking the material substance for the meal and the houses of plenty are those who do not fall into the net of a secure household. (And, most obviously, they are not the householders). That is, there is a broad division between the "insecure" (i.e., those who are not financially solvent or do not fall under the security of a patron/ess's economic umbrella) and the "secure" (i.e., those who are financially solvent or, despite insignificant status, find security under the covering—especially during the frequent storms). Tacitus, for example, describes certain people as those who were "attached to the great houses" ("*magnis domibus adnexa*," *Histories* 1.4).

Unlike the patron/ess and the household dependents, the non-slave labor did not enjoy the security of the "house." Under favorable economic conditions the nonslave laborers prospered; however, when the economy was threatened, they were the first affected and, effectively, the worst off. Since the "majority of the population living under Roman rule worked the land and were directly dependent on it for their livelihood"<sup>44</sup> and the nonslave (free workers) were employed by landowners only as they were needed "by informal, regular arrangements with neighbouring farmers and contractors of labour, not through the mechanism of an extensive labour market,"<sup>45</sup> any crop

mental axiom of the Christian message would have brought people from different religious and socioeconomic backgrounds together at the table and would have been of central importance in the teachings of Paul at Corinth (cf. 11:2).

<sup>43</sup> Judge, *Social Pattern*, 60; cf. S. S. Bartchy, *ΜΑΛΛΟΝ ΧΡΗΣΑΙ: First-Century Slavery and the Interpretation of 1 Corinthians 7:21* (SBLDS 11; Missoula, MT: Scholars, J.973). We should not altogether exclude the possibility that there were slaves present at the meal whose masters were not Christians and, therefore, not present to provide for them.

<sup>44</sup> P. Garnsey, "Non-Slave Labour in the Roman World," *Non-Slave Labour in the Greco-Roman World* (ed. P. Garnsey; Cambridge Philological Society Supplement 6; Cambridge: Cambridge Philological Society, 1980) 34-35.

<sup>45</sup> Garnsey, "Non-Slave Labour," 43.

failure would have been doubly disastrous. On the one hand, the free laborers would be the first to be without employment, and, on the other hand, they would be without the financial resources to afford the expensive staples (imported or otherwise) and would not have the security of a "household" to fall back upon.<sup>46</sup> In his recent book *Famine and Food Supply*, P. Garnsey submits:

The claim of wage-laborers to the product of the land was obviously the weakest, and they were particularly vulnerable in times of food shortage when demand slumped and wages fell. In comparison with wage-laborers, tenant farmers had greater access to the resources of the landlord, who might feel obliged to guarantee their subsistence, at least until the crop was harvested.<sup>47</sup>

Like the tenant farmer, the slave would enjoy a certain security as would the freedman who through manumission had received freedom but had decided to remain under the auspices of the householder. In such a case, the master-turned-patron would have exercised substantial control and would have been obligated to provide the necessary staples of life. The *libertini orcini* (including the wage laborers), on the other hand, could not always be assured of such security.<sup>48</sup> This classification of people (nonslave labor) was by no means small, making a shortage of food an immediate problem which could result in a riot.

If we are correct that the "have nots" at Corinth were believers who belonged to this group of people, the logical question which must be asked is "Do we have evidence for an event which would have affected the economy at Corinth so that this group was not prospering but rather without?"

### *A Famine at Corinth*

The bench mark for confirming whether a famine had threatened an area in the Greco-Roman world was the appointment of a curator

<sup>46</sup> Of course the independence of the nonslave was precarious and is precisely why the number of slaves increased and the number of independents decreased (cf. Garnsey, "Non-Slave Labour," 43).

<sup>47</sup> P. Garnsey, *Famine and Food Supply in the Graeco-Roman World: Responses to Risk and Crisis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988) 45.

<sup>48</sup> Of course it is possible, as Garnsey suggests, to "envision a class of freedmen with living patrons, who might have been kept in tow, but were in practice given a considerable measure of freedom, . . ." "Non-Slave Labour," 45; cf. Judge, *Social Pattern*, 31. These "have nots" could have "appealed to the Haves to play patron" in which case the relationship with the patron would have been based on deference. "He in turn was granted the right to command" (MacMullen, *Roman Social Relations*, 123-24). The only other safety net was the generosity of others: "Smallholders who were also a valued source of seasonal labour on a large estate were perhaps better cushioned against disaster, if they could accept their neighbours aid without falling into debt and dependence," Garnsey, *Famine and Food Supply*, 45-46.

to cope with the actual or potential threat to the populace. The office of "curator of the grain supply" (*curator annonae*) was crucial in the ancient world during severe shortages.<sup>49</sup> "In Corinth, as elsewhere, *curatores annonae* were probably not annually elected officers. Instead they seem to have been appointed in times of threatened or actual famine, and often, . . . the office fell upon men of wealth who used their private resources for the relief of the city."<sup>50</sup> This phenomenon of appointing a wealthy patron in time of crisis was not rare. As S. C. Humphreys has recently observed: "In many cities the concepts of political office and of liturgy . . . had completely merged."<sup>51</sup>

The epigraphic evidence from Corinth indicates that on numerous occasions it was necessary to appoint men to the office of *curator annonae* in order to alleviate the tension precipitated by a potential or actual shortage and, thereby, dispel potential unrest. In the 1st century A.D. a wealthy benefactor by the name Tiberius Claudius Dinippus held the office of *curator annonae* no fewer than three times at Corinth.<sup>52</sup> In addition to the many other offices he held at Corinth, he was also *agonothete Neroneon*. What is most striking for our study is the dating of the inscriptions.

<sup>49</sup> For the most recent treatment of famine in the ancient world see: P. Garnsey, *Famine and Food Supply*; P. Garnsey and C. R. Whittaker, ed., *Trade and Famine in Classical Antiquity* (Cambridge Philological Society Supplement 8; Cambridge: Cambridge Philological Society, 1983). It was, of course, common for the government to regularly distribute grain (usually monthly), cf. Garnsey and Sailer, *The Roman Empire*, 83-88. On the grain supply of Rome see G. E. Rickman, *The Corn Supply of Ancient Rome* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1980). It is most striking that even though the Jewish community had a common purse and other mechanisms to attend to the needy, the poorer in their midst still received the dole, cf. M. Smallwood, *The Jews under Roman Rule. From Pompey to Diocletian. A Study in Political Relations* (Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity 20; 2d ed.; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1981) 136-37.

<sup>50</sup> A. B. West, ed., *Corinth. Results of Excavations Conducted by the American School of Classical Studies at Athens*. Vol. 8, Part 2, *Latin Inscriptions, 1896-1926* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1931) 73; cf. Wiseman, "Corinth and Rome," 499.

<sup>51</sup> S. C. Humphreys, "Public and Private Interests in Classical Athens," *Classical Journal* 73 (1978) 98.

<sup>52</sup> The significance of the Dinippus inscriptions has recently been brought to my attention by B. Winter. His own assessment of the significance of the material appears as "Secular and Christian Responses to Corinthian Famines," *Tyndale Bulletin* 40 (1989) 86-106. For the Dinippus inscriptions see West, *Corinth. Latin Inscriptions*, nos. 86-90, and J. H. Kent, *Corinth. Results of Excavations Conducted by the American School of Classical Studies at Athens*. Vol. 8, Part 3, *The Inscriptions, 1926-1950* (Princeton, NJ: The American School of Classical Studies at Athens, 1966) nos. 158-63.

\*No. 158 = "[Members of the tribe -----] (erected this monument) to Tiberius Claudius Dinippus, [son of Publius, of the tribe Fabia], who was duovir, [duovir quinquennalis], augur, priest of Britannic Victory, [military tribune of Legion VI] Hispanensis, chief engineer, curator of the grain supply three times, [agonothetes] of the Neronea [Caesarea and the Isthmian and Caesarean games]." The fact that Dinippus received the highest

A B. West has suggested that Dinippus' presidency of Neronea Caesarea should be assigned to the early part of Nero's reign, most likely the celebration of A.D. 55. Furthermore, he places the *quinquennialic duovirate* (the highest magistracy of the colony) in the year A.D. 52/53.<sup>53</sup> Most importantly, it is probable that Dinippus was *curator annonae* at the time of the severe famine during the reign of Claudius which, most probably, can be dated in the year A.D. 51.<sup>54</sup> "That Dinippus' service was rendered during this time is not at all improbable, and for the next few years Corinth would have good reasons for honoring him. Thus it is not strange to find him presiding over the next Isthmian celebration, the first of Nero's reign."<sup>55</sup> J. Wiseman also dates Dinippus' curatorship to the severe famine during the year in which Gallio was governor of Achaëa (A.D. 51-52).<sup>56</sup> If this dating is accurate, then it would have occurred shortly after Paul's departure in A.D. 51.

We find corroborating evidence for a famine in Paul's response to the Corinthians' queries in 1 Corinthians. The issues addressed in 1 Corinthians 7 (i.e., matrimonial status and procreation) are certainly symptomatic of eschatological events<sup>57</sup> and, without question, the trauma surrounding a (potential) famine would have precipitated

honor that the city could bestow (agonothetes) suggests considerable wealth and beneficence (cf. Wiseman, "Corinth and Rome," 500).

Boulagoras of Samos also was a wealthy benefactor who was appointed three times as the corn supply commissioner of his city (*Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum* 366, cited in A R Hands, *Charities and Social Aid in Greece and Rome* (Aspects of Greek and Roman Life; London: Thames and Hudson, 1968) 176 (0.3); cf. Garnsey, *Famine and Food Supply*, 14-15).

<sup>53</sup> West, *Corinth. Latin Inscriptions*, 72-73; cf. Kent, *Corinth. The Inscriptions*, 74-75.

<sup>54</sup> West, *Corinth. Latin Inscriptions*, 70.

<sup>55</sup> West, *Corinth. Latin Inscriptions*, 73.

<sup>56</sup> Wiseman, "Corinth and Rome," 505. The most likely date for Gallio's term of office is from spring to spring, A.D. 51-52, cf. Wiseman, "Corinth and Rome," 503-4; Murphy-O'Connor, *St. Paul's Corinth*, 146-50; and V. P. Furnish, "Corinth in Paul's Time: What Can Archaeology Tell Us?" *Biblical Archaeology Review* 15 (1988) 19.

<sup>57</sup> That is, should a man have sexual intercourse with his wife? See the evidence collected by G. O. Fee, "1 Corinthians in the NIV," *JETS* 23 (1980) 307-14; cf. idem, *First Corinthians*, 275, as well as the additional material in Winter, "Corinthian Famines," 94, n. 43. Herein lies the insight into the text which is gained by a detailed study of attendant circumstances. On this score, Winter has been able to provide (what is in our opinion) a satisfactory explanation of the impetus behind the questions raised by the Corinthians in addition to providing the background to serious problems (e.g., at the table). Given the recent famine which would have been interpreted as an eschatological event (cf. Mark 13:3-37), Fee is surely correct when he renders ἀνάγκη (1 Cor 7:26) as a present reality (*First Corinthians*, 328-29; cf. Winter, "Corinthian Famines," 93). Without question, famine at Corinth (and elsewhere) was a constant threat and concern (cf. 1 Clem. 56:9).

such anxiety.<sup>58</sup> Given all these indicators, it is most likely that the issues which Paul addresses in view of the present distress (διὰ τῆν ἐνεστῶσαν ἀνάγκην, v 26) have arisen on account of the recent famine.

*Once Again: Paul's Response*

If this historical reconstruction is accurate, then the problems alluded to in 1 Cor 11:17-34 can be explained in light of the recent development, i.e., the famine. That this was indeed the cause of the problem is the most likely given the alternatives. In a time when famine threatened the populace, the householders as well as the slaves and freedmen who fell under their auspices would have had sufficient food and drink.<sup>59</sup> Therefore, as in Theissen's (and others') interpretation, the injunction to "wait for one another" makes little sense. The alternative, "share with one another" (as over against "devouring your own meal"), however, befits the problem: those who have the security of ample food during a difficult period such as a famine should share with those who could have otherwise contributed to the common meal according to their means.<sup>60</sup> This is precisely the principle invoked in later tradition (from Corinth!, cf. *1 Clem.* 38:2) which also knows of famine (56:9).

Without undue embellishment, this interpretation could be helpful in understanding what Paul is alluding to when he writes, "about the other matters, I will provide directions when I come" (τὰ δὲ λοιπὰ ὡς ἂν ἔλθω διατάξομαι, 11:34b). Assuming that he had dealt with the issue of commensality Jewish and Gentile) during his lengthy stay at Corinth, Paul was later confronted with a new development concerning which (some of) the Corinthians sought his advice. From our historical reconstruction we demonstrated that there was a famine at Corinth shortly after Paul's departure and a curator was appointed to establish the mechanism by which the potential unrest could be quenched and the populace assured that food would be distributed to the needy. Ironically, it would seem, this spirit of benefaction at Corinth was lacking when the believers gathered for the Lord's Supper. To this end, Paul instructs them to share. It is consonant, then, to suggest that Paul would have addressed the issue of (regular) distribution of food to those who

<sup>58</sup> Winter, "Corinthian Famines," 93.

<sup>59</sup> Garnsey argues that "euergetism [public generosity of the wealthy]. . . was an institution devised by the rich in their own interests. As the grain stocks of the community were in their barns, they could time their release to suit themselves; that is why the same class produced euergetists and profiteers," *Famine and Food Supply*, 272.

<sup>60</sup> Bornkamm, *Early Christian Experience*, 128; E. von Dobschutz, *Christian Life in the Primitive Church* (Theological Translation Library 18; trans. G. Bremer; New York: Putnam, 1904) 61-62.

were in need. This is precisely his recommendation during the gathering of the believers.

The Corinthians who were evidently not willing to display generosity during the gathering might have argued that the mechanisms for distribution of the needed staples were well established and confirmed by the appointment of a curator.<sup>61</sup> If the needy were lacking (daily or otherwise), provisions could be obtained through the governmental channels. Perhaps Paul's response concerning these matters (τὰ λοιπὰ) was too involved and required his presence rather than his words. It may very well be that he would have established an alternative mechanism within the church to ensure that the economically disadvantaged were taken care of by the church and not the city. To be sure, similar mechanisms were already at work in Judaism.<sup>62</sup>

### Summary

The central importance of the Lord's Supper and the common meal in the early church established the incontrovertible necessity of house gatherings. The radical implications of the gospel message necessitated cultural and religious disestablishment which could only be manifest at

<sup>61</sup> Winter, "Corinthian Famines," 102-3.

<sup>62</sup> The recently published inscription from Aphrodisias (in Caria-140 km/87 mi. east of Ephesus) by J. Reynolds and R Tannenbaum confirms that benefactors (including God-fearers) contributed to programs within that community, in this case a community soup kitchen (πάτελλα). The *raison d'etre* for the erection is given as: εἰς ἀπενθησίαν τῷ πλήθει ἔκτισα[ν], translated as: "erected for the relief of suffering in the community. . ." or, alternatively: "erected for the alleviation of grief in the community." This would correspond to the Hebrew יְחִמְתָּ (found both in the Mishna, Tosephta, and both Talmudim as the name of a charitable institution; cf. G. F. Moore, *Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era: The Age of the Tannaim* [3 vols.; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1927-1930] 2.176-77, and E. Schurer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ* [ed. and rev. G. Vermes, F. Millar, M. Black, and M. Goodman; 4 vols.; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1973-1987] 2.437. This charitable institution was organized in Jewish communities and was required by Mishnaic law "for the daily collection. . . and distribution of cooked food gratis to the poor and vagrant" (*Jews and God-fearers at Aphrodisias: Greek Inscriptions with Commentary* [Cambridge Philological Society Supplement 12; Cambridge: Cambridge Philological Society, 1987]). They date the inscription from the 3d century AD. (19-22). The discovery was reported by K T. Erim in *AJA* 81 (1977) 306, and *Assyriological Studies* 27 (1977) 31. Reynolds and Tannenbaum conjecture that, although the literary sources are later than the NT period, the reference to the ἡ διακονία ἡ καθημερινή (the daily service/distribution) in Acts 6:1 might indicate a daily distribution of food to widows (and perhaps others in need) by the early Christian community of Jerusalem, which is likely to have been copied from a Jewish community institution such as the one found at Aphrodisias. If this is indeed the case, it is conceivable that such charities were extant in Palestine in the thirties of the 1st century AD.

the "table," The boundaries which defined Judaism as a race and religion were drawn at the table; therefore, the desegregation of the Christian message had for its appropriate setting the table. Similarly, the boundaries which defined social and economic classes were forcefully exposed at a meal. It was uncommon for different classes to eat together: "The interests brought together in this way probably marked the Christians off from other unofficial associations, which were generally socially and economically as homogeneous as possible".<sup>63</sup>

In the case of the meals at Corinth and the famine, it appears as though the Christians tolerated existing mores: in the case of a food shortage the appointment of a curator would hopefully lessen the discrepancy. Paul, however, seems dissatisfied with the existing scheme. The only way in which the Christians can become the body is to eat of one body, together, This meant sharing, particularly in the context of a Christian gathering, Love for one another must be manifest above all when a meal was shared, and the significance of the bread and cup must displace former conceptions which tolerated inequality and uneven distribution,<sup>64</sup>

<sup>63</sup> Judge, *Social Pattern*, 60.

<sup>64</sup> In this respect, Klauck's claim that, in part, "Die Hausgemeinde war. . . .Erstfall der christlichen Bruderlichkeitn is on target (*Hausgemeinde und Hauskirche*, 101-2), although he does not use the expression in this particular context.

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