

The Corinthian Eucharistic Dinner Party: Exegesis of a Cultural Context (1 Cor. 11: 17-34)

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Dear colleagues and friends:

Homileticians and systematic theologians are talking about contextual theology these days, developing an ear for the modern addressees of the gospel, exegeting the cultural contexts of the audiences to whom they preach. The more culturally pluralistic our society becomes, the more contextual awareness is developed by theologians.

In modern biblical scholarship, a parallel movement is taking place. Especially within the still relatively new field of social-historical or sociological exegesis, close attention is paid to the cultural context of the ancient addressees and authors of biblical texts. The gospel has never existed "pure" in a test-tube from which it could be poured out into particular cultural situations. It always has been interwoven with and "incarnated" into human cultural contexts. Any exegetical-hermeneutical process bridging the biblical text and a modern audience therefore implies at least a twofold contextual approach: It explores the culture of the modern *and* of the ancient addressees.

By looking at 1 Corinthians 11, I want to give you one example of a historical-contextual exegesis. According to 1 Corinthians 11, the Corinthians misbehaved during their eucharistic meals. But why? What did the cultural context for their behavior look like? Which Greco-Roman meal customs explain best the Corinthians' behavior at their eucharistic dinner parties? I promise you a "cultural shock," because my contextual reconstruction of the Corinthian situation will be a new solution differing from what you have read about this chapter of the Bible before.

I. The Corinthian Situation

The Corinthian Christians came together on Sunday (or Saturday) evenings¹ in order to celebrate the eucharist and to have a nourishing dinner (*deipnon*). Some ate a lot and even got drunk; some others, however, stayed hungry. The pre-Pauline eucharistic tradition in verses 23-25 pres-

ents a three-step sequence of events: First the eucharistic bread is blessed and broken. Then a nourishing dinner takes place. It ends with the blessing of the cup and the drinking out of it. As G. Theissen² has shown, there is no reason to assume that the Corinthians' eucharistic praxis differed from this sequence of events. What went wrong in Corinth is that the nourishing dinner between the breaking of the bread and the blessing of the cup did not satisfy everybody. We have to analyze this abuse in a minute.

First I want to invite you to a pagan Greco-Roman dinner party of the first century C.E. in order to illuminate some of the cultural context of the Gentile Christians in Corinth. (See the left side of Table 1 below.) Often you take a bath in the afternoon at the eighth hour of the day.³ Usually at the ninth hour you meet for dinner in the host's house.⁴ During the dinner you recline at the so-called "First Tables," and several servings are given. Afterwards a symposium at "Second Tables" may take place.⁵

TABLE 1

The Greco-Roman Dinner Party (Dinner + Symposium/Eranos)	The Corinthian Eucharistic "Potluck Dinner" (Eranos)
- Dinner at "First Tables"	- The richer Corinthians eat "early" (v. 21)
Break Start of the "Second Tables" : - a sacrifice, invocation of the house gods and of the geniuses of the host and of the emperor	- Blessing and Breaking of the Bread, invocation of Christ
- Second Tables (often with guests who had newly arrived)	- The sacramental eucharistic meal (some stay hungry)
- a toast for the good spirit of the house, the tables are removed	
- the first wine jug is mixed, libation, singing	- Blessing of the Cup
- drinking, conversation, music, singing, entertainment in a loose sequence	- drinking - Maybe the worship activities of 1 Cor. 12 + 14 (espec. 14:26-32): singing, teaching, prophesying, glossolalia (with translations); no orderly sequence

Religious ceremonies accompany even the regular, non-cultic dinner party. The dinner at “First Tables” starts with an invocation of the gods.⁶ After the dinner there is a break; new guests can arrive. The house gods and the geniuses of the host and the emperor are invoked and a sacrifice is given.⁷ People recline again and eat and drink at the “Second Tables”; often not only sweet desserts and fruit, but also spicy dishes, seafood, and bread are served.⁸ The “Second Tables” end with a toast for the good spirit of the house. The tables are removed, the floor is swept; in a jug, wine and water are mixed and a libation to a god is poured out while people sing a religious song.⁹ Slaves pour the wine from the jug into the participants’ cups.¹⁰ Whenever the jug is empty, a new one is mixed, another libation is sacrificed, and people continue drinking, conversing, and entertaining themselves. This can go on until dawn.

You realize that religious elements at a dinner party were nothing new for the Gentile Christians. They even had opportunities to compare their eucharistic dinner with elements of the pagan dinner party. Both the First and the Second Tables were started with a little religious ceremony—so was the eucharistic dinner, which was started with the blessing and the breaking of the bread. The eucharistic cup after the dinner could be seen in parallel to the mixing of the first jug of wine. Both signal that all eating is over now. Both are accompanied by a religious ritual, either by a blessing (1 Cor. 10:16) or a libation. These are the first parallels the Corinthians could draw.

Let us now try to understand what went wrong in Corinth. Why did some stay hungry while others were well fed and even got drunk (v. 21)? We have to interpret especially verse 21, where Paul reproaches the more well-to-do¹¹ Corinthians for eating their “own dinner” beforehand—before the others of lower social strata arrive (cf. also v. 33), i.e., before the eucharistic breaking of the bread starts and before the eucharistic meal between the bread blessing and the cup takes place. We have to interpret these two expressions: The richer Corinthians “begin prematurely” (*prolambanein*) their “own dinner” (*idion deipnon*).¹²

Let us look at the “own dinner” (*idion deipnon*) first. One Greco-Roman background for the Corinthian *idion deipnon* has been overlooked in the past. I am talking about the Greco-Roman custom of the *eranos*: Each Corinthian Christian brought his or her own food basket to the communal meal of the eucharist. *Eranos* can be translated as “potluck dinner,” although “potluck” has a narrow definition as a meal where all the food

brought by the participants is shared on a common table. The *eranos* has a broader definition, like a picnic: It can be practiced in two possible ways. Either each participant eats his or her own food that he or she brought in a basket, or all the meals are put on a common table as is done at a potluck dinner.

The *eranos* custom can be traced all the way back to Homer's time; it still exists in the second century C.E. (Athenaios, Aelius Aristides, Lucian).¹³ The guests either bring their contributions as money or as meals in baskets. Aristophanes describes this custom nicely (*Acharnenses* 1085-1149): "Come at once to dinner," invites a messenger, "and bring your pitcher and your supper chest." The hosts provide wreaths, perfumes, and sweets, while the guests bring their own food which will be cooked in the host's house. They pack fish, several kinds of meat, and baked goods in their food baskets before they leave home. Also Xenophon (*Mem.* 3.14.1) describes how the participants of a dinner party bring *opson*, e.g., fish and meat, from home. "Whenever some of those who came together for dinner brought more meat and fish (*opson*) than others, Socrates would tell the waiter either to put the small contributions into the common stock or to portion them out equally among the diners. So the ones who brought a lot felt obliged not only to take their share of the pool, but to pool their own supplies in return; and so they put their own food also into the common stock. Thus they got no more than those who brought little with them..." Here we have a close parallel to the Corinthian problems. Both Paul and Socrates try to protect the *eranos* custom from abuse: This custom should not lead some to gorge while others stay hungry.

Not only could everyday dinner parties be organized as an *eranos*, but also cultic meals such as the sacrificial meal of the Sarapis cult in the second century C.E. (Aelius Aristides, Sarapis 54.20-28, Dindorf). Sarapis is considered present at the table as guest and host at the same time. The participants of the sacrificial meal contribute some food. Sarapis receives these contributions and serves them out to all who are present—a close parallel to the eucharist.

In the light of the Greco-Roman potluck custom, I reconstruct the Corinthian scenario in the following way. Celebrating their eucharistic dinner parties according to the *eranos* custom, each Corinthian brought his or her own food, but some came early and started eating before the others arrived. And some of the latecomers either had no time or no money to prepare sufficient food baskets for themselves. Because of this they stayed

hungry, for when *they* arrived, those who had brought enough for themselves had already eaten most of their own food and could not share it any more.

The Corinthian *eranos* has become a social problem for three reasons: The self-prepared food portions apparently were of different sizes and qualities—as at Socrates' dinner party. Second, there was no common starting point. Some started *before* everybody was present and before the eucharistic ritual could take place. And third, as J. Murphy O'Connor¹⁴ points out, for the latecomers there was probably no room any more in the *triclinium*, which was the dining room where usually no more than twelve could recline. The latecomers had to sit in the atrium or in the peristyle, which was another disadvantage for them.

One point has to be illuminated a little further in order to understand the richer Corinthians' behavior a little better. So far they look very inconsiderate and rude to us, not waiting for the others, eating *before* the others arrive. Can their "premature beginning" (*prolambanein*) be interpreted in the light of Greco-Roman meal customs? Not mentioning the eucharistic praxis in the letter with questions addressed to Paul (cf. 1 Corinthians 7, 8-10, 12-14, 16:1-4), the richer Corinthians did not perceive their behavior as a problem. Apparently they did not have a bad conscience when they started eating before the others. How was this possible? Their behavior starts to look a little more understandable once we recall the Greco-Roman distinction between First Tables and Second Tables. Apparently the richer Corinthians understood their eating early in analogy to a dinner at First Tables. In the break between the First and Second Tables, the other Corinthian Christians of lower social strata arrived. This was nothing extraordinary for Gentile Christians. In the pagan context new guests could arrive for the Second Tables.¹⁵ It was a common custom to drop by at a friend's house for the symposium part of the evening.¹⁶ And nobody at a Greco-Roman dinner party asked the newcomers whether they had already eaten enough.

Here we have a Greco-Roman cultural setting that explains very well the Corinthians' behavior. The richer Corinthians seem to have interpreted the beginning of the sacramental, eucharistic meal in analogy to the beginning of the pagan Second Tables. This was easy to do, because the pagan Second Tables also started with religious acclamations and sacrificial rites (see Table 1). A libation for the emperor, for example, was poured out;¹⁷ the Christian breaking and blessing of the bread replaced this element of the imperial cult.

The Second Tables easily presented themselves as analogies also because they were ended with a toast to the good spirit of the house and with the mixing of the first wine jug; analogously, the eucharistic meal was ended with the eucharistic cup. The blessing of the eucharistic cup was analogous to the singing and the libation which accompanied the mixing of the first wine jug.

To interpret the sacramental eucharistic meal in analogy to the Second Tables of a Greco-Roman dinner party was furthermore easy to do because, as we noted earlier, often more than just sweet desserts and fruit were served at the Greco-Roman Second Tables. Often spicy dishes, seafood, meat, vegetables, and bread were eaten as well.¹⁸

Looking back at the Corinthian scenario, the richer Corinthians' inconsiderate behavior resulted from an unreflected prolongation of their pre-baptismal behavior. They continued a Greco-Roman meal custom by dividing the evening into First and Second Tables, which led to problems in the Corinthian church.

Also at other places in the first letter to the Corinthians we encounter the more or less unreflected prolongation of prebaptismal behavior. Not only did the Greeks love trials and to sue each other (cf. 1 Cor. 6:1-11); also visiting a courtesan was culturally accepted (cf. 1 Cor. 6:12-20). The Corinthian Christian ladies who did not veil themselves (1 Corinthians 11) did this in an environment where the women were totally free to veil or not to veil themselves.¹⁹ Paul, who was used to veiled women in Tarsus, Syria, and Arabia, may have suffered a cultural shock when he came to Greece. Eating idol meat (1 Corinthians 8-10) was culturally accepted everywhere in the Greco-Roman world, only the Jews made an exception. The Corinthians' orientation toward not the crucified but the risen and victoriously reigning Lord may have been rooted in the Greco-Roman veneration of heroes. As Heracles and other heroes had victoriously overcome difficult challenges, for the Corinthians, Christ had overcome the cross and had left it behind, so that the cross was of little relevance for the present Christian existence (4:8). These and other examples show that not all characteristics of the Corinthian Christians need to be interpreted in terms of a given *theological* background as has been done in the past. Often the Corinthian Christians simply continued being a part of the Greco-Roman culture to which they belonged before their baptism. Only slowly did they realize that the church was a new cultural setting where new customs and habits needed to be developed in some areas.

II. Paul's Practical Advice to Solve the Corinthian Conflict

Paul criticizes the "premature beginning" (*prolambanein*) of any dinner. Being a Jewish Christian who is used to the Jewish festive meal, he sticks to the three steps of blessing the bread, a nourishing meal, and the blessing of the cup (cf. Table 2 below and also the pre-Pauline eucharistic tradition in 1 Cor. 11:23-25). No dinner activities should take place *before* the eucharistic meal (11:21), which starts with the blessing of the bread. The richer Corinthians have to wait for the others (11:33) before they unpack their food baskets.

TABLE 2

Paul's suggested "Christian Culture" on Sunday (or Saturday) evenings:

- Waiting for one another
- Blessing of the Bread
- A eucharistic potluck dinner that nourishes everybody (Eranos)
- Blessing of the Cup
- Drinking—Maybe the worship activities of 1 Cor. 14:26-32

Verses 22 and 34 have caused dissent among commentators. "Do you not have houses to eat and drink in?" "If anyone is hungry, let this one eat at home." Some commentators²⁰ concluded from these verses that Paul wanted only bread and wine to be served at the eucharistic meal, and that he did not want the Corinthians to have a complete, nourishing meal between the breaking of the bread and the blessing of the cup. If we went with this interpretation, Paul would be cynical: The hungry ones would only be given bread and wine during the congregational meeting, while the richer Corinthian Christians would be expected to gormandize at home, but not to share with the hungry ones. If this were Paul's advice, then he himself would "humiliate the have-nots" (11:22), contradicting himself.

However, 11:33 already indicates that Paul wants the Corinthians to have a nourishing meal not only at home but also during the congregational meeting. In fact, the Greek term for "dinner" (*deipnon*, 11:20, 25) that Paul

uses to label the eucharistic meal never just means dry bread; it always includes several foods that were eaten *with* the bread: fish or meat, sometimes also vegetables (*opson*). The one who blessed the bread blessed all the dishes that were eaten with this bread.²¹ For this reason, the eucharistic tradition in verses 23-25 only talks about the blessing of bread and of nothing else. These verses cannot prove that only bread was served during the eucharistic meal.

Verse 34, "If anyone is hungry, let this one eat at home," has to be interpreted in the light of its context, verse 33. In verse 33 Paul exhorts the Corinthians to wait for one another. For some, this waiting may have been hard, especially if they had visited the thermal baths, as was frequently done before a Greco-Roman dinner party. These Paul advises in verses 34 and 22: If you have difficulty waiting because you are hungry, then eat something at home before you go to the congregational meeting. But once you are there, wait before unpacking your food basket until all fellow Christians have arrived.

If everyone has to wait before unpacking his or her own baskets, then this means that the contents of these food baskets are expected to be shared on common platters. Otherwise the waiting which is supposed to prevent some from staying hungry would be senseless.

Thus Paul's practical advice aims at the same as Socrates' actions described by Xenophon: An *eranos* only becomes a really communal meal once the foods brought by the participants are shared. And only that can be shared which has not been eaten beforehand.

III. The Basis for Paul's Practical Exhortations in the Theology of the Cross

Paul's exhortations advocate a socially oriented behavior that builds up the community. How does Paul endorse the exhortations theologically? The starting point of Paul's theological argumentation is the eucharistic tradition that he quotes in verses 23-25. In verse 26 he sums up this tradition in his own words: "As often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes."

Let us first look at the eucharistic tradition itself (vv. 23-25). Paul and the Corinthians are convinced that the risen Lord Jesus Christ with his saving power is really present at the eucharist as the host of the ritual. Looking at the example of the Sarapis cult, we already saw that similar concepts existed

in the cultural environment. Whether Paul and the Corinthians also believed in a real presence of the Lord *in the elements* of bread and wine (cf. John 6:52-58) is, however, exegetically controversial. Such an assumption could not be based on 1 Cor. 11:23-25, in any case. The cup or the wine is *not* equated with Christ's blood. The cup rather signifies the new *covenant* which was established *because* of Christ's blood on the cross. In a similar way the expression "This is my body for you" does not necessarily refer to the bread. It is also possible that the "this" picks up on the liturgical act of blessing and breaking the bread (v. 24): This act signifies "my body (broken) for you";²² this act points to Jesus' body on the cross and to his death on the cross. The formulation "*do* this in remembrance of me" (v. 24) indeed supports the reading that the liturgical *act* of blessing and breaking the bread is interpreted in verse 24, and not the element of the bread.

However this may be, for us it is more important to note Paul's summary of the eucharistic tradition (v. 26): Whenever the Christians perform the liturgical acts of eating and drinking, they "proclaim" Christ's death. Both sacramental acts represent Christ's death for us. They make this death *present* for the Christians. Accompanying words during the eucharist may fulfill the same function; verse 26, however, focuses on the liturgical acts themselves, through which Christ's death is proclaimed.

Here the puzzling theological problem of the text starts. What does the proclamation of Christ's death have to do with the ethical exhortations that Paul gave? The eucharistic sacrament represents Christ's saving death and makes it present among us. But how does Paul conclude from this that the participants in the eucharist have to behave in a thoughtful and loving way? How does Paul build the bridge between the sacramental proclamation of Christ's death and the ethics? This is not only the central theological question of the text; it is also the most difficult one, because Paul does not describe this bridge between sacrament and ethics. We have to look at parallel Pauline texts.

I want to look with you at three possible bridges. The first one is based on 1 Cor. 8:11. Christ died also for the weak ones; therefore, the strong Christians in Corinth are not allowed to look down at and to offend the weak fellow Christians. This is the message of chapter 8. Accordingly we could formulate for chapter 11: In the eucharist, the salvation of Christ's death on the cross is made present, and this salvation is not only for the richer Christians in Corinth, but also for the poorer ones. Therefore the richer ones are not allowed to humiliate the poorer ones (11:22). In this way, 8:11

helps to build a bridge between the sacrament and the ethics.

Two other bridges are also possible. The second one is based on Philippians 2. In the eucharist, Christ's death is made present among us. This death, however, stands for Christ's self-denial (Phil. 2:7-8): "Christ *emptied* himself, taking the form of a servant . . . and being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross." In other words, in the eucharist, Christ's self-denial for the benefit of others is made present among us. How, then, can the richer Christians ignore the hunger of the poorer ones in an egocentric way? In view of Christ's cross, where Christ "emptied himself" for others, in view of this death made *present* in the sacrament, Paul exhorts: Let each of you look not only to his or her own interests, but also to the interests of others (Phil. 2:4). Here we have a second bridge between the sacramental representation of Christ's death and the ethics.

Now the third one. According to Romans 6:2-8, the sacramental representation of Christ's death means that the Christians *die* with Christ in the sacrament. Romans 6 formulates this in view of the baptism, but it also holds true for the eucharist, as 1 Cor. 10:16 shows. In the eucharist a close relationship is established between us and Christ's body on the cross, that is, a close relationship between us and Christ's suffering on the cross. In the sacrament we die *with* Christ. For Paul this close relationship, this communion with the crucified Christ, means that he represents Christ's death and cross in his own life, carrying in his own body the death of Jesus (2 Cor. 4:10). Such a cross-existence includes self-denial and active love for others (2 Cor. 4:15, 4:12; 1 Cor. 4:11-13, etc.). And there we have our third bridge between the sacramental representation of Christ's death and our Christian behavior.

The three bridges are not mutually exclusive. They illuminate different aspects of the same thing, which is: Christ's loving and self-denying death on the cross, made present in the eucharist, leads directly to corresponding behavior of those who participate in the eucharist.²³

What, then, does it mean to "proclaim" Christ's death in the eucharist? In the eucharist the death of Jesus Christ is not made present and "proclaimed" (11:26) only by the *sacramental acts* of breaking bread and of drinking wine from one cup. In the eucharist Christ's death is not proclaimed only by the liturgical *words* that accompany the sacramental acts. No, in the eucharist, Christ's death is also proclaimed and made present by

means of our giving ourselves up to others. Our love for others represents Christ's death to other human beings. Only by actively loving and caring for others does the participant in the eucharist "proclaim" Christ's death as something that happened for others.

Forgetting the care for others, the Corinthians were only interested in the vertical communion with the risen Lord. Paul, however, says that you can only have a close relationship with the risen Lord by realizing that this Lord is at the same time the *crucified* Lord (1 Cor. 2:2). As long as the eschaton has not come yet (11:26), the communion with the risen Lord is feasible only as a close contact with the *crucified* Christ, with his sufferings and with his abounding love for others on the cross. By sharing in this cross-existence and in this love, the Christians are led to care for others, proclaiming Christ's death in their existence.

Those whose behavior does not correspond to Christ's death for others eat the sacrament in an unworthy way (11:27) and the Lord judges and punishes them by making them physically weak and sick and by letting them die early (11:30). Being punished already now, these Christians escape the eschatological damnation in the final judgment (11:32, cf. 5:5, 3:15).

As strange as this little speech about the judging Lord in 11:29-32 may seem to us, it is theologically important. The Lord who is present at the eucharist with his saving power is at the same time a *judging* Lord. That means: Christ's real presence in the eucharist is not at our disposal. Paul destroys the Corinthians' false sacramental security (cf. also chapter 10). The Lord is sovereign and not domesticated in human sacramental acts. On the contrary, not the Lord, but the human being and human behavior are seized and impounded in the eucharist, being put under Christ's reign—and judgment. While the sovereign Lord commits himself to the eucharist, he also commits *us*, engages *us*, and obliges *our* behavior.

Looking back at the Corinthian scenario, we realize that by emphasizing Christ's death on the cross, Paul corrects two meal customs that the Corinthians have been used to since their pagan days. First, Paul tries to modify the custom that everybody brings his or her own food basket. Paul tries to make sure that a real potluck meal with *sharing* takes place. Second, Paul criticizes the Corinthian dichotomy of the evening in First Tables and Second Tables. Eating earlier than the others destroys the loving community of the eucharistic participants. Paul tries to correct and to reshape both

elements of the Corinthian cultural context.

What authorizes him to reshape the Corinthian cultural context? When a preacher tries to change a cultural context in the name of the gospel, what guarantees that Christ is behind this enterprise, and not just a cultural bias of the preacher, so that the gospel becomes a pretext to impose one cultural bias over another one? Paul is not free from this danger. In the first half of chapter 11, dealing with the veiling of women, he indeed may show evidence of a cultural bias that is both cloaked and endorsed by theology. Is the theological argumentation in the second half of chapter 11 stronger? I think it is. This text names one important criterion for those who struggle with the question of how far the gospel can be accommodated to and “incarnated” into certain cultural contexts, how far Christians can go in tailoring themselves to a cultural environment, and where elements of this context have to be eliminated in the name of the gospel. According to Paul, the criterion has to be put like this: Do I “proclaim” Christ’s death in my life—not only by moving my lips and hands in sermons and liturgical acts, but also by *living* according to Christ’s death? According to Paul, this co-existence of the Christian would be an important criterion in the contextuality debate. Do I die with Christ, giving myself up with Christ on behalf of others, building up others, thus pointing to and “proclaiming” Christ’s death to other people? This uncomfortable existential question would be one Pauline guideline for those who ask themselves how far they can go in adapting to a cultural context. Paul becomes a Jew for the Jews and a Gentile for the Gentiles. You realize that his guiding question leaves a lot of room for the dynamics of active love. To build up others can mean different things in different cultural contexts. So the Christian has to be sensitive to these contexts—but at the same time responsible to his or her own identity as somebody for whom Christ gave up himself in his death, and who died *with* Christ.

Let me put the challenge of our text a little differently. If it is true that the proper participation in the eucharist is tied to active love towards others, especially towards other participants in the eucharist, then this text becomes very provocative if we apply it to the global level of world Christianity. It may be easy to love the other participants in the eucharist in our local church, which is more or less socially and culturally homogeneous. But what about other eucharistic participants at other places on this globe—let’s say in so-called Third World countries? Asking this question, we can feel how provocative this text must have been for the Corinthians. Our text implies that if you ignore the hunger and the needs of other eucharistic

participants, be they in Corinth, in Latin America, Africa, Eastern Europe, or in Asia, then you do not live according to Christ's death, then you eat and drink judgment upon yourself in the eucharist (vv. 27-32). And this provocation gives us a great deal to think about.

Thank you. I will see you at the reception downstairs for the "Second Tables."

Notes

1. *Deipnon* (vv. 20, 21, 25) is the evening dinner. Cf. also "in the night" in v. 23. Sunday or Saturday evenings: Cf. 1 Cor. 16:2 with Acts 20:7, Rev. 1:10, Ignatius *Magnesians* 9:1, Didache 14:1, Barnabas 15:9.

2. G. Theissen, "Soziale Integration und sakramentales Handeln," *Novum Testamentum* 16 (1974): 187-188.

3. Martial *Epigrammata* 11.52, 10.48, Plato *Symposium* 174 A.

4. Cicero *Ad Familiares* 9.26.1, Horace *Epistulae* 1.7.71, Martial *Epigrammata* 4.8.6, cf. 10.48, 11.52; eighth or ninth hour: *Oxyrhynchus Papyri* 110, 2678 (3rd century C.E.), 2791 (2nd century C.E.).

5. For information on the Greco-Roman dinner party cf., e.g., *Paulys Realencyclopädie der klassischen Altertumswissenschaft*, neue Bearbeitung von Wissowa/Kroll, 3/2 (1899): 1895-1897, s.v. "Cena"; 4/1 (1900): 1201-1208, s.v. "Convivium"; 4/1 (1900): 610-619, s.v. "Comissatio"; 4/A,1 (1931): 1266-1270, s.v. "Symposion"; D. E. Smith, *Social Obligation in the Context of Communal Meals: A Study of the Christian Meal in 1 Corinthians in Comparison with Graeco-Roman Communal Meals*, Th.D. Diss. Harvard 1980, 5-32.

6. Quintilian, *Declamationes* 301 (Ritter, p. 187).

7. Horace *Carmina* 4.5.31-32, Servius *Aeneis* 1.730, Petronius *Satyrica* 60, Dio Cassius *Historiae* 51.19.7, *Acta Fratrum Arvalium*, ed. W. Henzen, 15, 42-43.

8. Cf., e.g., Gellius *Noctes Atticae* 13.11.6-7, Athenaios *Deipnosophistae* 3.109 DE, 4.129, 14.639 B-643 D, especially 640 B-F, 641 BCF, 642 ADEF, 643 A-D.

9. For information on the libation cf. *Paulys Realencyclopädie der klassischen Altertumswissenschaft*, 4/1 (1900): 611, s.v. "Comissatio." Libation and singing belong together: Plato *Symposium* 176 A, Xenophon *Symposium* 2.1. The song was probably of religious content: Plato *Symposium* 176 A, Plutarch *Quaestiones convivales* 7.8 (713 A), 1.1 (615 B).

10. Cf. *Paulys Realencyclopädie der klassischen Altertumswissenschaft*, 4/1 (1900): 612, s.v. "Comissatio."
11. See Theissen (1974) 182-183, 185-186 and H.-J. Klauck, *Herrenmahl und hellenistischer Kult*, Münster: Aschendorff 1982, 293. The ones who "prematurely begin their own dinner" (v. 21) probably possess their own houses (11:22); they have enough time in the afternoons, while the others are still busy at work.
12. Some scholars have tried to translate *pro lambanein* simply as "to eat" without any temporal sense (e.g., W. Bauer, W. F. Arndt, F. W. Gingrich, F. Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979], 2nd ed., 708). But they base their understanding on a single inscription only (SIG³ 1170) where *pro lambanein* may even have been confused with *proslambanein* by the stone-mason.
13. Homer *Odyssey* 1.226-227 with (schol.) 11.414-415, Hesiod *Opera et dies* 722-723, Aristophanes *Acharnenses* 1085-1149, Xenophon *Memorabilia* 3.14.1 and *Symposium* 1.11, Athenaios *Deipnosophistae* 8.365 AB, Aelius Aristides *Sarapis* 54.20-28 (Dindorf), Lucian *Lexiphanes* 6, 9, 13. Cf. *Paulys Realencyclopädie der klassischen Altertumswissenschaft*, 11/1 (1921): 948, 957, s.v. "Kochkunst"; 6/1 (1907): 328, s.v. "Eranos"; 4/1 (1900): 1201-1202, s.v. "Convivium"; 3/A,2 (1929): 1891-1892, s. v. "Spyris"; 4/A,1 (1931): 1090, s.v. "Symbole (2)"; E. Ziebarth, *Das Griechische Vereinswesen*, Leipzig 1896, 15. The following texts talk about money instead of food contributions: Athenaios *Deipnosophistae* 8.365 DE, Eustathius *Ad Homeri Iliadem* 16.764, 17.578, Schol. Aristophanes *Acharnenses* 1210-1211, *Syll.*³ 1045, Terence *Andria* 88, *Eunuchus* 540-544, Plautus *Curculio* 474, *Stichus* 438, *Epidicus* 125. Cf. also Gellius *Noctes Atticae* 7.13.12, Plutarch *Quaestiones convivales* 6.8 (694 B). Often the same people repeated *eranos* dinner parties; a dinner club came into existence. Cf., e.g., Aristotle *Ethica Nicomachea* 1160a.20 (*eranos* = dinner club) and *Paulys Realencyclopädie der klassischen Altertumswissenschaft*, 6/1 (1907): 330, s.v. "Eranos"; E. Ziebarth (1896) 15-16, 193, 135; *ILS* 7212.
14. J. Murphy-O'Connor, *St. Paul's Corinth* (Wilmington, Delaware: Michael Glazier, Inc. 1983), 158-159.
15. Cf. Plato *Symposium* 212 CD, 223 B, Lucian *Lexiphanes* 9, 13, Athenaios *Deipnosophistae* 5.180 A, and the texts mentioned in *Paulys Realencyclopädie der klassischen Altertumswissenschaft*, 4/1 (1900): 618-619, s.v. "Comissatio."
16. Zenobius *Epitome* 2.46 (Leutsch and Schneidewin).
17. Horace *Carmina* 4.5.31-32, Petronius *Satyrica* 60, Dio Cassius *Historiae* 51.19.7.
18. See above, note 8.
19. Cf. C. L. Thompson, "Hairstyles, Head-coverings, and St. Paul: Portraits from Roman Corinth," *Biblical Archaeologist* 51 (1988): 99-115.

20. E.g., Theissen (1974) 191-192, Klauck (1982) 294, 371.

21. This was also true for the Jewish understanding: *Mishna Berakhot* 6:4 and 6:5 C; cf. T. Zahavy, *The Mishnaic Law of Blessings and Prayers: Tractate Berakhot*, Brown Judaic Studies 88 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987), 84-85.

22. "This *is*" can be interpreted as "this means": see, e.g., the allegorical equations of Gal. 4:24, Mark 4:15-16, 18.

23. In the light of these three bridges, the debated verse 11:29 becomes clearer. It needs to be paraphrased like this: For anyone who eats and drinks without "judging correctly" and "understanding correctly" (*me diakrinein*, cf. Matt. 16:3) Christ's crucified body on the cross, eats and drinks judgment upon himself or herself. He or she does not realize (a) that this body was also broken for the poorer fellow Christians, whose needs therefore cannot be ignored by the richer ones. This was the first bridge. He or she does not realize (b) that this body on the cross stands for Christ's self-denial for the benefit of others, which wants to be imitated by us. This was the second bridge. And he or she does not realize (c) that the eucharist establishes a close relationship between this crucified body of Christ and us: We die *with* Christ in the sacrament. We die to sin (Rom. 6:11); and therefore we are set free to love others actively.