The Problem with the Observance of the Lord’s Supper in the Corinthian Church

BARRY D. SMITH
CRANDALL UNIVERSITY

The defining characteristic of the σχίσματα in 1 Cor 11 is most likely socioeconomic. What is not so clear, however, is what exactly transpires during the Lord’s Supper that leads to the humiliation of the poor members present. There are five hypotheses that reconstruct the details of how the wealthy humiliate their social inferiors; these can be called the sequential-sponsored, sequential-potluck, inhospitable, private-meal, and eranos hypotheses. In order to determine which of these five hypotheses is the most historically accurate, six interrelated questions must be answered. These questions are: (1) Does an ordinary meal (Sättigungsmahl) separate the Brotritus (bread rite) and the Kelchritus (cup rite) from each other? (2) Are the “have-nots” expected to bring their own food and drink to the Lord’s Supper? (3) To whom does ἐκάστος refer in 11:21? (4) What does the verb προλαμβάνει in 11:21 mean, and what does Paul mean by his admonition συνερχόμενοι εἰς τὸ φαγεῖν ἀλλήλους ἐκδέχεσθε? (5) What gives τὸ ἴδιον δεῖπνον consumed by ἐκάστος its character as ἴδιον, and how does τὸ ἴδιον δεῖπνον differ from κυριακὸν δεῖπνον? (6) Do the wealthy and the poor eat from a different menu? The responses to these questions collectively represent a reconstruction of how it happens that in the Corinthian church the wealthy consume more food and wine than the poor, thereby humiliating the latter. The most convincing hypothesis turns out to be the sequential-sponsored hypothesis.

Key Words: Lord’s Supper, Paul, Corinthians

INTRODUCTION

The errant nature of the Corinthians’ observance of the Lord’s Supper consists in the humiliation of one group by another through the inequitable consumption of food and drink. Paul writes that, when the Corinthians meet together, it is not for the better but for the worse (11:17). In explanation of this, he says that he has heard that there are divisions (σχίσματα) among them. What Paul has in mind is a separation between those who have more than enough to eat and drink at the Lord’s Supper and those
who have insufficient quantities.\textsuperscript{1} This is evident from the fact that Paul contrasts in 11:21 the “one who is hungry” with “one who is drunk,” and that in 11:22 he identifies a group within the church as the “have-nots” (οἱ μὴ ἔχοντες), whose members are humiliated by the actions of their counterparts, who are said to own houses, unlike the former.\textsuperscript{2} The result is that they despise the church of God.\textsuperscript{3}

The defining characteristic of the σχίσματα in 1 Cor 11 is probably socioeconomic. It seems that these two groups correspond to members of the church who are relatively wealthy, more powerful and of higher social rank, on the one hand, and those who are relatively poor, less powerful and of a lower social rank, on the other.\textsuperscript{4} In other words, the so-called “New

\textsuperscript{1} The thesis “that early Christian meals were all variations of the Greco-Roman banquet and should be studied from that perspective” is questionable (Dennis Smith and Hal Taussig, \textit{Many Tables: The Eucharist in the New Testament Today} [Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1990], 36; see Dennis Smith, \textit{From Symposium to Eucharist: The Banquet in the Early Christian World} [Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003]). There is no doubt that Jews and Christians adopted aspects of the Greco-Roman symposium into their festival meals. But to assume methodologically that there was a cross-cultural social institution of the “banquet,” a common meal tradition shared by diverse ancient cultures, is unjustifiably dogmatic. A more nominalistic approach is preferable.


In 11:22, the καί in καὶ καταισχύνετε τοὺς μὴ ἔχοντες is epexegetic (Wayne Meeks, \textit{The First Urban Christians} [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1983], 68 n. 97). Justin J. Meggitt argues unconvincingly that Paul’s term “the have-nots” has an implied object, that is, “the bread and wine of the eucharist,” in which case it carries no socioeconomic implications (\textit{Paul, Poverty and Survival} [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1998], 120). The phrase οἱ μὴ ἔχοντες has close parallels in Greek sources denoting the poor, those who have less than most others in their society. The wealthy are called οἵ τι ἔχοντες (Herodotus 6.22), and ὁ ἔχων is used to denote the rich (Sophocles, \textit{Ajax} 157). The phrase οἱ οὐκ ἔχοντες occurs in Euripides, \textit{Suppl.} 238–44, where it describes the poor in contrast to the middle class and the wealthy (see Theissen, “Social Conflicts in the Corinthian Church: Further Remarks on J. J. Meggitt, \textit{Paul, Poverty and Survival},” \textit{JSNT} 25 (2003): 371–91, esp. pp. 378–79. Theissen correctly rejects the view of Meggitt and Lundemann, who claim that the phrase οἱ μὴ ἔχοντες refers to those lacking something specific in a concrete situation. See also Steven J. Friesen, “Poverty in Pauline Studies: Beyond the So-Called New Consensus,” \textit{JSNT} 26 (2004): 323–61, esp. pp. 348–50.

See Theissen, “Social Conflicts in the Corinthian Church,” 378. Meggitt claims improbably that the statement that those who are causing “the have-nots” to be hungry “have” houses (11:22) must be rejected as evidence of socioeconomic distinctions within the church, because “to have” does not necessarily mean to own, and even if it does mean that, these houses “might well be little more than a shack or lean-to” (\textit{Paul, Poverty and Survival}, 121).

\textsuperscript{3} Like Meggitt, Andreas Lindemann denies that those who eat and drink to the point of satiation could be of a higher social status than “the have-nots,” for otherwise Paul explicitly would identify the social factors that contributed to the creation of the σχίσματα (Der Erste Korintherbrief [HNT 9/1; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000], 247–61, esp. p. 253). The better explanation is that Paul can assume these social factors, because everyone concerned is already well aware of them.

Consensus” in its basic outline is correct: there are social factors behind the conflict that Paul describes in 1 Cor 11:17–33. Normally, the wealthy do not associate as equals with those who are their social inferiors. But faith in Christ has changed this, for believers from different strata of Corinthian society assemble together as equals, although, as Paul points out, most are from a lower rank (1 Cor 1:26). In this egalitarian setting, unusual for the Greco-Roman world, the wealthy members act inconsiderately toward their fellow believers from lower social strata by consuming more than their share of the provisions available for the Lord’s Supper. Such an ineq-


5. Some identify the divisions referred to earlier in 1 Cor 1:10 with those in 1 Cor 11:18 (see, for example, Hans Lietzmann, An die Korinther I/II [completed by Werner G. Kümmel; 5th ed.; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1969]; Bo Reicke, Diakonie, Festfreude und Zelos [Uppsala: Appelbergs, 1951], 252–53; Hans-Werner Bartsch, “Der korinthische Mißbrauch des Abendmahl,” Entmythologisierende Auslegung [Theologische Forschung 26; Hamburg: Herbert Reich Evangelischer Verlag, 1962], 169–83). Walter Schmithals believes that, behind the four factions referred to in 1 Cor 1:12, there lay one: Paul’s Gnostic opponents. It is this same group that is responsible for the trouble at the community’s observance of the Lord’s Supper (Die Gnosis in Corinth [2nd ed.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1965], 237–44; ET: idem, Gnosticism in Corinth [Nashville: Abingdon, 1971], 250–56). More recently, Peter Stuhlmacher has connected the theologically based schism of 1 Cor 1 with that in 1 Cor 11 (“Das neutestamentliche Zeugnis vom Herrenmahl,” ZThK 84 [1987]: 1–35, esp. pp. 22–23; ET: idem, “The New Testament Witness Concerning the Lord’s Supper,” Jesus of Nazareth, Christ of Faith [Peabody, MA.: Hendrickson, 1993], 58–102, esp. pp. 86–87 (see Adolf Schlatter, Paulus der Bote Jesu: Eine Deutung seiner Briefe an die Korinther [Stuttgart: Calwer, 1934], 316–17 for a similar reconstruction). But, although Paul uses the same word to describe them, the σχίσματα mentioned earlier in 1:10 do not seem to have any bearing on the Corinthians’ errant celebration of the Lord’s Supper, because no reference to the leaders associated with these divisions is found in this passage. See Günther Bornkamm, “Herrenmahl und Kirche bei Paulus,” ZThK 53 (1956): 312–49, esp. pp. 315–16; Hofius, “Herrenmahl und Herrenmahlparadosis,” 374–75; idem, “The Lord’s Supper and the Lord’s Supper Tradition,” 78–79; Theissen, “Soziale Integration und Sakramentales Handeln,” 182–83; idem, “Social Integration and Sacramental Activity,” 147–48; Friedrich Lang, Die Briefe an die Korinther (NTD 7; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1986), 148; Gordon D. Fee, The First Epistle to the Corinthians (2nd ed.; NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 537; Panayotis Coutsoumpos, Paul and the Lord’s Supper: A Socio-Historical Investigation (SBL 84; New York: Peter Lang, 2005), 57–59. Even if these two are connected in some way, it is the socioeconomic dimensions of these divisions that Paul has in view in 1 Cor 11.

6. Meggitt concludes, “By itself Paul’s words in 1 Cor. 1:26 can tell us nothing concrete about the social constituency of the congregation he addresses except that a small number were more fortunate than the others” (Paul, Poverty and Survival, 105–6). But this does not seem to be the case at all; rather, Paul’s statement does indicate the existence of social stratification in the Corinthian church (see Theissen, “Social Conflicts in the Corinthian Church,” 375–76). Whether those who were “wise, powerful and noble” were only relatively better off than their counterparts, but not part of the elite or ruling class, is an unnecessary question for this study; all that needs to be established is some socioeconomic diversity in the Corinthian church (see David G. Horrell, “Domestic Space and Christian Meetings at Corinth: Imagining New Contexts and the Buildings East of the Theatre,” NTS 50 [2004]: 349–69, esp. pp. 357–59).

7. Schmithals presents another explanation of the origin and nature of the σχίσματα at the Lord’s Supper (Die Gnosis in Corinth, 237–44; Gnosticism in Corinth, 250–56). He argues that originally the Lord’s Supper was not intended to be a meal that satisfied the hunger of its participants but became this over time. As Paul established it, the Lord’s Supper began with the blessing over bread and its consumption and came to completion with the blessing over the
uitable distribution of provisions at the Lord’s Supper would be consistent with Roman social norms. Since Corinth was a Roman colony at the time of the founding of the church, it is probable that the wealthy present at the Lord’s Supper conformed to this practice: they assumed for themselves positions of honor within the church, so that at the celebration of the Lord’s Supper they habitually consumed greater quantities of food and drink than the rest. Paul disagrees with this practice, however, believing that it leads to the humiliation of the poor.

8. It was an accepted practice at Roman banquets to make distinctions among the invited guests by serving different quantities of food. Officials of various social organizations in Roman society were frequently honored at banquets by being served larger portions. The collegium in Lanuvium, for example, ruled that “Any member who has administered the office of the quinquennalis honestly receives a share and a half of everything as a mark of honor” (CIL 14:2112). This custom led to the identification of various officials by how much more they would receive at these banquets: sesquiplicarii, duplicarii, triplicarii (Theissen, “Soziale Integration und Sakramentales Handeln,” 198; idem, “Social Integration and Sacramental Activity,” 162; see Meeks, The First Urban Christians, 67–69). In a letter sent to his father, a certain Ptolemaios expects to receive a double portion at a banquet of Serapis because of his prior service as agoranomos: “After consideration, therefore, I have taken up the post of agoranomos so that I need not pay the novices’ fee nor for a place; but also I receive double portions, and I provide them with wood” (P’Mich 8:511; Hans-Josef Klauck, Herrenmahl und hellenistischer Kult: Eine religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung zum ersten Korintherbrief [2nd ed.; NTAbh n.s. 14; Munster: Aschendorff, 1982], 293).


10. Those who have informed Paul of the problem are probably of the same mind (1 Cor 11:18). Whether those who are humiliated by not receiving enough to eat actually “feel” humiliated is difficult to answer. Interestingly, in Lucian’s Gallus, Micyllus, a shoemaker, is so grateful at being invited to a symposium that he can tolerate the slight of being forced to recline below a windbag of a Stoic philosopher, whom the other guests shun. But at least Micyllus receives an equal share of the food and drink served at the symposium. Perhaps some of the Corinthian Christians are so grateful at being allowed to eat with their social superiors that they think nothing of being deprived of their share of food and drink. At any rate, Paul believes that “the have-nots” are being humiliated, whether they feel like it or not.
Unfortunately, there is no general consensus on the details of how it happens that the wealthy eat and drink more than their social inferiors during the celebration of the Lord’s Supper. The Corinthian church probably meets together in the homes of its wealthier members, such as Gaius (Rom 16:23, 1 Cor 14:23). (Smaller groups may have met in other settings at other times.) These meetings include not only prayer, sharing of prophecies and speaking in tongues accompanied by interpretation (1 Cor 11:1–16; chap. 14), but also the celebration of the Lord’s Supper, during which the offense is committed. This much is clear. What is not so clear, however, is what exactly transpires during the Lord’s Supper that leads to the humiliation of the poor members present. The purpose of this article is to analyze the available data from the primary sources, both 1 Cor 11 and data relating to meals from Greco-Roman sources, in order to answer this question as completely as possible.

**FIVE PROPOSED RECONSTRUCTIONS**

Five hypotheses have been proposed concerning how the wealthy humiliate their social inferiors at the celebration of the Lord’s Supper in Corinth by eating and drinking more than they should. According to the first hypothesis, which can be called the *sequential sponsored hypothesis* (SS), in the practice of the Corinthian church, what later comes to be known as the Eucharist follows an ordinary meal (Sättigungsmahl), later to be known as an agape feast (see Acts 20:7; Jude 12; 2 Pet 2:13; Did. 10; Ignatius Smyrn. 8; Tertullian, *Apol.* 39). When he refers to the “Lord’s Supper” (κυριακὸν δεῖπνον; 11:20), Paul means both of these in sequence. The problem in the Corinthian church is that the entire community does not partake equally of the ordinary meal, or at least not all the time. To their credit, the wealthy function as benefactors to the poor members by serving as sponsors of the meal; but they begin eating before the poor arrive, so that sometimes not enough food remains for the poor, who have made no or at most a very small contribution to the ordinary meal. They are not excluded, however, from the Brotritus (bread rite) and Kelchritus (cup rite) that follow. The reason that Paul uses the phrase τὸ ἴδιον δεῖπνον (11:21) to refer to the meal that each of the wealthy assembles from the provisions that they themselves supply for the ordinary meal is that, insofar as the wealthy begin eating before the poor arrive, the provisions are not offered as common fare but de facto still retain the character of private property. Only when all the provisions are

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equally accessible will they be eating the Lord’s Supper (κυριακὸν δείπνον; 11:20).

Bornkamm suggests two rationalizations that the wealthy may have used to justify their behavior.\(^\text{12}\) First, because the poor are not excluded from the more important participation in the Brotritus and Kelchritus, the wealthy may not have considered their exclusion from the preceding ordinary meal to be significant. Second, the wealthy may have justified eating before the poor arrive in the name of unity: taking an ordinary meal together would cause such social friction that the unified celebration of what later will be known as the Eucharist following the meal would be impeded.

This reconstruction assumes certain semantic decisions. On this hypothesis, the two key verbs are translated with a temporal sense. Paul’s statement that ἕκαστος γὰρ τὸ ἴδιον δείπνον προλαμβάνει (11:21) is translated as “For each goes ahead with his or her own meal,” and his admonition ἀλλήλους ἐκδέχσθε (11:33) is taken to mean “Wait for one another.” It further follows that ἕκαστος in 11:21 refers to each of the wealthy, not to each and every participant. Likewise, Paul’s statement in 11:22 “Do you not have houses in which to eat” is directed not to all the members but to only those who had houses in which to eat, the wealthy, as is his admonition in 11:34 “If anyone is hungry, let him or her eat at home.”

The second hypothesis agrees with the sequential sponsored hypothesis that an ordinary meal precedes the Brotritus and Kelchritus. Different from it, however, it holds that the ordinary meal is intended to be a potluck affair. Everyone from all social strata is intended to contribute equally to the meal; the contributions are to be pooled and offered as common fare.\(^\text{13}\) The second hypothesis could be called the sequential potluck hypothesis (SP). Klauck bases his conclusion that the ideal is for each to contribute something to the meal on the parallels that exist between the pagan Serapis meal and the Lord’s Supper, extrapolating from the former to the latter. A Serapis meal is intended to bring the diners into communion with the god Serpais (see 1 Cor 10:16–17). Each participant brings an offering of food to Serapis, which is then received back from the god as a gift and eaten communally. As further evidence that each of the Corinthian believers is expected to make a contribution to the ordinary meal, Klauck cites the Greco-Roman institution of the eranos meal as another ancient parallel to the Lord’s Supper.\(^\text{14}\) In an eranos meal, as explained more fully below, each


\(^{14}\) Klauck, Herrenmahl und hellenistischer Kult, 293; see pp. 68–76. Klauck cites the example in Athen. 8 (362E) to the effect that mutual sharing is the means by which the community is constituted. See also Peter Lampe, “Das korinthische Herrenmahl im Schnittpunkt
participant is expected to bring something for the meal. According to the sequential potluck hypothesis, the reason that some are hungry is that the poor show up with meager and inadequate contributions only to discover that the wealthy have already eaten and drunk what they have brought. No doubt the wealthy, being already sated (“drunk”), would not want anything that the poor brought, and there would be little left of what the wealthy have brought for the poor to eat and drink. What makes the meal that the wealthy eat a private meal (τὸ ἴδιον δεῖπνον) is that the provisions are not pooled and offered to all equally. Rather, the wealthy eat theirs before any sharing is possible.

The third hypothesis posits that the wealthy act inhospitably toward the poor and humiliate them, insofar as they bring to the Lord’s Supper provisions that far exceed those of the poor and consume these in their presence. This could be termed the inhospitable hypothesis (INH). Hofius insists that, to do justice to the context, προλαμβάνει must have the meaning “take into (the meal),” which is as lexically feasible as the meaning “to go ahead with.” This leads him to interpret ἕκαστος in 11:21 comprehensively, to mean that every person—both wealthy and poor—takes (προλαμβάνει) his or her own food and drink into the Lord’s Supper, however meager in the case of the poor. The problem is that, because the poor do not bring enough, and the wealthy will not share from their more-than-sufficient provisions, the former remain hungry even after consuming what little they have, while the latter are overfed and drunk. One could add to the argument that this behavior would be consistent with the Roman practice of serving inequitable portions at a banquet for the purpose of making social distinctions among the participants. Presumably, what makes each meal τὸ ἴδιον δεῖπνον is that no one shares with the others what he or she has brought to the Lord’s Supper, the wealthy in particular.


16. Hofius, “Herrenmahl und Herrenmahlparadosis,” 384–91; idem, “The Lord’s Supper and the Lord’s Supper Tradition,” 88–96. Winter argues that προλαμβάνει has the meaning “to devour,” rather than a temporal sense (see After Paul Left Corinth, 144–48); see R. A. Horsley, 1 Corinthians (Nashville: Abingdon, 1998), 159. Winter argues that the reason the poor do not have enough food is that there is a famine at the time; this is the meaning of “the present distress” (1 Cor 7:25). See also B. B. Blue, “The House Church at Corinth and the Lord’s Supper: Famine, Food Supply and the Present Distress,” Criswell Theological Review 5 (1991): 221–39; A. D. Clarke, Secular and Christian Leadership in Corinth. A Socio-Historical and Exegetical Study of 1 Corinthians 1–6 (AGU 18; Leiden: Brill, 1993), 18–21. However, if true, one would expect Paul to say something in 1 Cor 11:17–33 about the need to help the poor survive this crisis; but his concern is not the threat to their lives but their humiliation.

17. See p. 520 n. 8.
The presence of μετὰ τὸ δειπνῆσαι in the paradosis (11:25) indicates, according to Hofius, that it is the practice of the Corinthian church to begin the Lord’s Supper with the breaking of the bread and to close it with the blessing over the cup, corresponding to a typical Jewish meal consisting of food and wine. Contrary to some exegetes, Hofius argues that μετὰ τὸ δειπνῆσαι is an adverbial phrase modifying ἔλαβεν . . . εὐχαριστήσας, being the completion of ὡσαύτως. This implies that a meal separates the Brotritus and the Kelchritus, so that the detachment of the ordinary meal from the Eucharist would be impossible. As Hofius puts it, “κυριακὸν δεῖπνον is a designation for the entire meal celebration consisting of bread rite [Brotritus], full meal [Sättigungsmahl], and cup rite [Kelchritus].”

On this hypothesis, Paul’s advice to the Corinthians in 11:33 (ἀλλήλους ἐκδέχσθε) must also be interpreted without a temporal sense. He means not that the wealthy should “wait for one another” but that they should “be hospitable to one another,” or something along these lines. During the Lord’s Supper, the wealthy are not to consume what they have brought to the Lord’s Supper in the presence of the poor, but they should make these provisions available as common fare. Thus, when in 11:22a he asks with sarcastic intent whether the Corinthians have homes in which to eat and drink (μὴ γὰρ οἰκίας οὐκ ἔχετε εἰς τὸ ἐσθίειν καὶ πίνειν), and when in 11:34a he advises that, if any is hungry, he or she ought to eat at home (εἴ τις πεινᾷ, ἐν οἴκῳ ἐσθιέτω), Paul means to stress the communal dimension of the meal over the practice of eating private meals during the Lord’s Supper. He is not setting a policy aimed at eliminating the temptation of the wealthy to begin eating—because they are so ravenous—before the poor arrive.

The fourth hypothesis also assumes that the Lord’s Supper consists of a meal opened with the Brotritus and concluded with the Kelchritus. But, different from Hofius’s reconstruction, Theissen’s proposal is that the wealthy collectively eat a “private meal” that consists of different and better provi-
sions than those offered to the poor. This could be called the private meal hypothesis (PM). In Theissen's reconstruction, the wealthy function as hosts, providing for the meal out of their own resources. Adequate amounts of bread and wine are to be made available to all the participants of the Lord's Supper. The wealthy, however, supplement this simple fare with other foods, to which the poor are denied access. Doing this symbolizes their importance as benefactors of the community, according to Roman custom. In addition, according to Theissen, it is the practice of the wealthy to begin eating their “private meal” before the poor arrive and to continue to do so in their presence even after the start of the Lord’s Supper. This “private meal” consumed before and during the Lord’s Supper is what Paul signifies by the term τὸ ἴδιον δείπνον (11:21). Accordingly, Theissen interprets ἕκαστος in 11:21 to mean each wealthy person, not every single one present at the meal. Paul's words may appear to describe individual behavior, but it is really class-specific behavior, confined to the wealthy members of the Corinthian church. The reason the poor are hungry is that, in addition to consuming their “private meal,” the wealthy patrons consume a greater quantity of the provisions of bread and wine reserved for Lord’s Supper with the result that there is not enough left for the poor.

On Theissen's reconstruction, the consumption of a “private meal” before and during the Lord's Supper is the cause of the divisions (σχίσματα) mentioned in 1 Cor 11:18. The wealthy commend themselves, because on account of their beneficence the community is able to maintain faithfully the paradosis handed on by Paul. But, as they see it, their practice of supplementing the basic provision that they supply for the celebration of the Lord's Supper does not contravene the paradosis: the tradition does not forbid their eating a “private meal.” Paul, however, finds this practice reprehensible, identifying it as resulting in socioeconomic divisions among the


23. Theissen interprets the phrase “not discerning the body of the Lord” (1 Cor 11:29) to mean that the wealthy do not discern the difference between food that belongs to the Lord's Supper and their “private meal” (“Soziale Integration und Sakramentales Handeln,” 189–90; idem, “Social Integration and Sacramental Activity,” 153). This is why they appropriate larger portions for themselves. Somewhat later in his essay, Theissen adds that Paul also intends by the phrase “not discerning the body” that the Corinthians do not discern that the solid component of the meal should only be bread and not other foods, especially meat (195; ET 159). As G. W. H. Lampe explains, it is difficult to know the meaning of “body” in the phrase “not discerning the body.” Nonetheless, according to him, probably Paul means by “body” either the community (as the body of Christ), the bread as representative of the body of Christ (“the body and blood of the Lord”) or both (“Church Discipline and the Interpretation of the Epistles to the Corinthians,” Christian History and Interpretation: Studies Presented to John Knox [ed. W. R. Farmer, C. F. D. Moule and R. R. Niebuhr; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967], 337–61, esp. p. 346; see also Calvin J. Roetzel, Judgement in the Community [Leiden: Brill, 1972], 137–38). Thus, Theissen's proposals seem too tenuous to be accepted.
Corinthians. Theissen interprets Paul’s rhetorical question in 11:22 “Shall I commend you?” to mean “Shall I commend you for differentiating between a ‘private meal’ and the Lord’s Supper, the result of which is the humiliation of the poor?”24 Along the same lines, R. Pesch argues that Paul’s purpose in reiterating the words of institution is to prove that nothing but bread should be eaten at the Lord’s Supper.25

The fifth hypothesis can be called the eranos hypothesis (ER) because it postulates that the Corinthian celebration of the Lord’s Supper should be understood as modeled on the Greco-Roman eranos meal, a “potluck dinner.”26 What Paul describes as the Lord’s Supper is actually a Christian version of an eranos meal, consisting of “first tables” followed by “second tables.” The first part of this eranos meal, or first tables, is a full meal. The participants bring food and drink, which is then shared in common.27 Present for this meal, however, are only the wealthy members of the Corinthian church, who, being the leisured class, can assemble earlier in the day than those of lower social rank. It is this meal taken at first tables to which Paul is referring in 1 Cor 11:21: ἕκαστος γὰρ τὸ ἴδιον δείπνον προλαμβάνει (11:21). In this case, “each” (ἕκαστος) refers only to those who are actually eating, and so is restricted to the wealthy. In theory, the meal taken at first tables is a communal meal, but, because the poor cannot assemble so early in the day, it becomes de facto a “private meal.” Because the eranos meal is a Greco-Roman cultural institution, the wealthy see nothing wrong with what they are doing. It is not their fault that those of lower social rank cannot join them earlier, and they still have the opportunity of being part of second tables. In fact, it is common for new guests to join an eranos meal for second tables, and, when they do, those already present see themselves as under no obligation to inquire whether the newcomers have eaten enough before coming. Paul’s admonition in 11:34 to eat at home if one is hungry is designed to put an end to the practice of taking a meal at first tables.

25. Pesch, Das Abendmahl und Jesu Todesverständnis, 63–64.
27. Another variant of the eranos meal is for each participant to eat from what he or she has brought, a type of picnic lunch. But Paul cannot blame the wealthy for the fact that the poor are hungry if this is what the Corinthians are doing, because the wealthy would have no obligation to share with the poor.
In an eranos meal, there is a break between first tables and second tables, at which time others may arrive and join the gathering. On the eranos hypothesis, this is when the poor members of the church make their appearance. Second tables begins with “religious acclamations and sacrificial rites,”28 which in the Christian transformation of the eranos meal becomes the Brotritus. Corresponding to the practice of invoking household gods and geniuses of the host and of the emperor, the meal begins with an invocation of Christ. Like the inhospitable and private-meal hypotheses, the eranos hypothesis assumes that the Pauline sequence of Brotritus, ordinary meal, and Kelchritus reflects the order of the Corinthian celebration of the Lord’s Supper. Because it is modeled on second tables, the Corinthian Lord’s Supper consists of more than just bread and wine; the blessing over the bread is representative of the variety of foods available. The meal ends with the Kelchritus, which corresponds to the toast to the good spirit of the house at a typical eranos meal. So, unlike Theissen’s reconstruction, the meal that the wealthy eat at second tables is not the same meal that they ate at first tables. The wealthy eat two meals, not one meal in two phases; unlike the wealthy who gathered earlier in the day, the poor eat only one meal. An eranos meal normally concludes with a drinking party, which may have been replaced in the Corinthian church with what Paul describes in 1 Cor 14:26: “When you assemble, each has a psalm, a teaching, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation.”

The fact that the poor are hungry and thereby humiliated is explained on the eranos hypothesis by the convergence of two factors. First, the poor do not bring any food or drink to the meal at second tables because either they do not have enough money to buy provisions or they do not have enough time to prepare meals for themselves.29 Second, the wealthy are so immoderate in their eating and drinking at first tables that they do not have enough left over to share with the poor at second tables. (This explains Paul’s remark that “some are drunk,” by which he means sated to point of being gluttonous.)30


29. It is unclear whether Coutsoumpos holds that the poor are supposed to bring their own food and drink or not. He seems to suggest that the wealthy take on themselves the obligation to feed the poor, in which case the Corinthian Lord’s Supper is not an eranos meal, contrary to his thesis. He writes, “The wealthy brought so much food and drink that they could indulge in gluttony and drunkenness. The poor who came later, however, had little or nothing to bring” (Paul and the Lord’s Supper, 105) and “Consequently, those who supplied houses and food were dishonoring . . . the poorer class” (p. 110). He also claims, “So, clearly, the richest members of the congregation were the hosts of the meeting and most likely provided the food for everyone” (p. 114) and “The poor member, who can bring hardly anything for himself, will, of course, feel ashamed when he sees the food brought by his fellow Christians” (p. 115). What is not clear is whether, for Coutsoumpos, the poor are expected to bring something to the meal or not.

30. The example of Xenophon’s Socrates is held up as an ideal to which to aspire: “Whenever some of the members of a dining-club brought more meat than others, Socrates would tell the waiter either to put the small contribution into the common stock or to portion it out equally among the diners. So the high batteners (οἱ τὸ πολὺ φέροντες) felt obliged not only to take their share of the pool but to pool their own supplies in return; and so they put their
Questions to Be Answered

From the review of the five hypotheses, it is evident that, in order to determine how it happens that the wealthy consume more food and wine than the poor, thereby humiliating the latter, several interrelated questions must be answered. The five hypotheses set forth above differ from one another precisely because their proponents answer these questions differently. Unknowns emergent from 1 Cor 11:17–34 that the historian must convert into knowns are: Does an ordinary meal (Sättigungsmahl) separate the Brotritus and the Kelchritus from each other (Q1)? Are the “have-nots” expected to bring their own food and drink to the Lord’s Supper (Q2)? To whom does ἕκαστος refer in 11:21 (Q3)? What does the verb προλαμβάνει in 11:21 mean and what does Paul mean by his admonition συνερχόμενοι εἰς τὸ φαγεῖν ἅπαντες ἕκαστος (Q4)? What gives τὸ ἱδίον δεῖπνον consumed by ἕκαστος its character as ἱδίον, and how does τὸ ἱδίον δεῖπνον differ from τὸ κυριακὸν δεῖπνον (Q5)? Do the wealthy and the poor eat from a different menu (Q6)? The answers to these questions provide the data necessary for a historical reconstruction.

Does an ordinary meal (Sättigungsmahl) separate the Brotritus and the Kelchritus from each other (Q1)? The sequential-sponsored and sequential-potluck hypotheses reject the idea that an ordinary meal is situated between the Brotritus and Kelchritus; rather, the ordinary meal precedes them. The other three hypotheses, however, hold that the Brotritus and Kelchritus frame an ordinary meal. In the eranos hypothesis the wealthy eat two ordinary meals, the second one situated between the Brotritus and Kelchritus, identified as second tables of an eranos meal. The inhospitable and private-meal hypotheses posit only one ordinary meal, although according to the latter the wealthy begin to eat it before all the poor have arrived.

On the assumption that the version of the words of institution delivered by Paul to the Corinthians reflect their actual practice, the presence of the prepositional phrase μετὰ τὸ δειπνῆσαι in 1 Cor 11:25 becomes a key piece of evidence in support of the position that the Brotritus and the Kelchritus are separated from each other by an ordinary meal. Although he overstates his case when he insists that there must be an article between the prepositional phrase μετὰ τὸ δειπνῆσαι and τὸ ποτήριον in order to interpret the prepositional phrase attributively,31 Hofius does seem correct in interpreting τὸ ποτήριον μετὰ τὸ δειπνῆσαι not as a terminus technicus for the Hebrew אֵין דִּיָּו (cup after the meal), a synonym for “cup of own supplies also into the common stock. And because they thus got no more than those who brought little with them, they gave up spending much on meat” (Xenophon, Memorabilia 3.14.1). Like Xenophon’s Socrates, Paul is supposed to want to protect the institution of the eranos from abuse (Lampe, “The Eucharist: Identifying with Christ on the Cross,” 39; Coutsoompas, Paul and the Lord’s Supper, 46–47).

blessing,” but as an adverbial prepositional phrase belonging to ἔλαβεν . . . εὐχαριστήσας. From this, he concludes that only “after eating” (the ordinary meal), inaugurated by the Brotritus, do the Corinthian believers reach the Kelchritus. Along the same lines, Theissen argues that an ordinary meal must have intervened between the word over the cup and that over the bread, because, “It is . . . unthinkable that Paul would quote a sacred, cultic formula, expressly state that he received it in just this and no other form, yet at the same time tacitly suppose that its order is not to be followed.” Paul would surely not have recommended changes to the paradosis.

Against those who claim that Paul’s version of the words of institution reflects an obsolete practice of combining an ordinary meal with the Brotritus and Kelchritus, one that no longer obtained at the time of the founding of the church in Corinth, the above argument is convincing. To claim that μετὰ τὸ δειπνῆσαι is part of an extinct liturgical practice is circular reasoning. So the burden of proof might seem to be on the one who would deny that Paul has delivered a liturgical formula to the Corinthians to which he does not expect them to conform their practice. But what needs to be taken into consideration is that the presence of the adverbial phrase μετὰ τὸ δειπνῆσαι may not be an indicator of liturgical practice at all, but owes its existence to the fact that, at Jesus’ last Passover meal, which is the basis of the liturgy of the Lord’s Supper, Jesus’ word over the bread was separated from his word over the cup by a Passover meal. In other words, the phrase μετὰ τὸ δειπνῆσαι may be a narrative remnant, which, because it had no liturgical function and rendered the introduction to the word over the cup unparallel to its counterpart, dropped out of later versions of the words of institution (Mark and Matthew).

32. Hofius cites supporters of his view (“Herrenmahl und Herrenmahl-paradosis,” 390 n. 113; idem, “The Lord’s Supper and the Lord’s Supper Tradition,” 95 n. 113).

33. Theissen, “Soziale Integration und Sakramentales Handeln,” 188; idem, “Social Integration and Sacramental Activity,” 152. The original German is: “Es ist . . . undenkbar, daß Paulus eine heilige kultische Formel zitiert, ausdrücklich versichert, so und nicht anders habe er sie empfangen und zugleich stillschweigend erwartet, man werde sich nicht an ihren Wortlaut halten.”


Tipping the balance in favor of the position that an ordinary meal does not separate the *Brotritus* from the *Kelchritus* are three arguments, damaging to all three hypotheses that assume the opposite. First, if the original *paradosis* includes an ordinary meal situated between the *Brotritus* and the *Kelchritus*, which the apostle is now hoping to eliminate or at least reduce significantly in scope with his advice that people eat at home before they come together, by reiterating the original *paradosis* in 11:23–25, Paul would render his efforts at rectifying the situation completely ineffectual. His opponents would merely point out that he is at odds with the very tradition that he delivered to the Corinthians and is now reiterating. It seems improbable that Paul would do this.

Second, an argument can be drawn from the fact that, in spite of their humiliation of the poor, the wealthy still commend themselves for their obedience to the *paradosis* (see 11:2, 17). If one follows the inhospitable hypothesis, there seem to be no grounds for such self-commendation: the wealthy, unwilling to share with the poor, eat their own meals in front of the latter, leaving them hungry. This could not be construed as obedience to the *paradosis* because the hungry poor are excluded as full participants in the Lord’s Supper. On the private meal hypothesis, as an act of hospitality, the wealthy agree to provide bread for the poor, even though they withhold from them other, more expensive foods. But, in order for the poor to be hungry, the wealthy consistently must not give them enough bread, a fact that certainly would give them no basis for self-commendation (11:22). The *eranos* hypothesis likewise provides no basis for self-commendation for the wealthy, because the poor who bring nothing to second tables do not have enough to eat. But on the assumption of the sequential-sponsored and sequential-potluck hypotheses that an ordinary meal precedes the *Brotritus* and the *Kelchritus*, the self-commendation of the wealthy becomes

36. The fact that Paul does not accuse the wealthy of eating in the presence of the poor tells against Hofius’s reconstruction, though this admittedly is an argument from silence (Klauck, *Herrenmahl und hellenistischer Kult*, 292).

37. It is conceivable that the Corinthian church is responsible for joining the *Brotritus* and *Kelchritus* with a preceding ordinary meal, which together become known as the Lord’s Supper. Paul initially has no objections to this, until he hears of the trouble that has resulted from this practice, outlined in 1 Cor 11. This would explain why Paul can so easily reduce the dimensions of the former with no apparent sense that he is making alterations to the original *paradosis*.

38. Schmithals argues that some of the Corinthians deliberately begin to consume private meals in order to undermine the cultic observance of the Lord’s Supper. In his view, Paul does not intend that there be an ordinary meal either before or during the Lord’s Supper; this is why Paul directs them to eat at home if they are hungry before they come together (Die *Gnosis in Corinth*, 237–44; idem, *Gnosticism in Corinth*, 250–56). The problem with Schmithals’s thesis is that Paul’s criticism that some of the Corinthians are hungry and thereby humiliated (11:21–22) implies that they should not have been. It follows that Paul expects the Lord’s Supper to include an ordinary meal, the purpose of which is to satisfy hunger, even if he did not originally institute the joining of the *Brotritus* and *Kelchritus* with an ordinary meal. If Paul objects to the existence of the common meal itself, one would expect this to be the thrust of his criticism of the Corinthians, but it is not.

39. Likely, in the letter that they sent to Paul, the Corinthians commended themselves for following the traditions that Paul delivered to them (1 Cor 11:2).
understandable. If sometimes they are delinquent in providing the poor with adequate fare for the preceding ordinary meal, the wealthy are at least to be commended for the fact that they provide them the opportunity of participating in what will be known as the Eucharist, even though the bread consumed during the *Brotritus* is inadequate to quell their hunger. After all, this is by far the more important part of the Lord’s Supper, and participation in it alone is required by the original *paradosis*.

Third, one can argue from the *paradosis* itself—reiterated by Paul in 11:23–25—that no ordinary meal separates the *Brotritus* and *Kelchritus*. The words of institution in 1 Cor 11:23–25 support the practice of a ritual meal, but not an ordinary meal, the purpose of which is to satisfy hunger (*Sättigungsmahl*). This is because the only food mentioned in the words of institution is bread, but an ordinary meal would not likely consist solely of bread, contrary to Theissen’s view. Thus, if an ordinary meal is consumed at all by the participants, it is more likely to have preceded the *Brotritus* and *Kelchritus*, because to situate the ordinary meal between them would be a departure from the *paradosis*, which mentions nothing but bread and wine.

A further argument can be produced against the position that an ordinary meal separates the *Brotritus* from the *Kelchritus*, but only as formulated in the inhospitable and private-meal hypotheses, insofar as both reconstruct the Corinthian practice as *one* ordinary meal situated between the *Brotritus* and *Kelchritus*, unlike the *eranos* hypothesis. Paul’s admonition in 11:34a εἴ τις πεινᾷ, ἐν οἶκῳ ἐσθιέτω implies that the ordinary meal is easily detachable from the *Brotritus* and *Kelchritus*. Something like this would

40. As Bornkamm argues (“Herrenmahl und Kirche bei Paulus”).

41. Pesch argues that, because bread was the staple of the ordinary people in the Mediterranean world, the Lord’s Supper was composed only of bread (Das Abendmahl und Jesu Todesverständnis, 67). Meggitt adopts the same position (Paul, Poverty and Survival, 190–91). He argues that the problem in Corinth results from the fact that some at the Lord’s Supper eat all the bread and drink all the wine before the rest can react. He writes, “The community treated the elements of the Lord’s Supper (v. 20) as though they were constituents of a normal meal (v. 21) with the consequence that when the church came together to eat (vv. 20, 33) some consumed all the bread and wine quickly (v. 33), leaving others, who were far less fast on the uptake, with nothing (v. 22) (something quite plausible given the limited quantity of the elements).” In a footnote, he suggests that a result of this sort would be easy to achieve because it is probable that there is only one loaf and one cup used for the Lord’s Supper. Meggitt’s proposal is unconvincing. First, it is hard to imagine some of the Corinthians stealthily eating the loaf of bread and drinking the one cup of wine reserved for the Lord’s Supper with the result that they deprive the others of the opportunity to participate in the ritual. A motivation is lacking for this sort of behavior. Second, Paul’s criticism that some are hungry would be off the mark, because the purpose of the meal would not have been to satisfy hunger. Rather, he should criticize the eaters and drinkers for not allowing the others to participate in the ritual. Dennis Smith points out that the fact that some were getting too much to eat while others were going hungry means “that the meal was intended, at least, to provide adequate food” (From Symposium to Eucharist, 178). If the Lord’s Supper even partially approximates other religious meals or banquets of the time, more than bread was served. Xenophon explains, “For all, I presume, eat meat with their bread when they get the chance” (Memorabilia III. 14, 2). See Theissen, “Soziale Integration und Sakramentales Handeln,” 191; idem, “Social Integration and Sacramental Activity,” 155.
only be possible if there is no ordinary meal interposed between them. Conversely, if the Lord’s Supper consists of an ordinary meal inaugurated by the Brotritus and terminated by the Kelchritus, Paul’s advice would have the effect of radically changing the character of the Lord’s Supper, because, if followed, his counsel would result in some coming to the meeting having already eaten and having no need of partaking of the Lord’s Supper. But there is no indication that Paul intends such a radical alteration of the Corinthians’ practice. It is more conceivable that Paul intends merely to reduce the less-important ordinary meal to proportions incapable of offense, while not changing at all the more important part of the Lord’s Supper that follows the ordinary meal.

Hofius does not consider this last argument convincing. According to him, Paul’s admonition in 1 Cor 11:34 is intended simply to make the point that there is a difference between private meals and the Lord’s Supper. In Hofius’s view, Paul wants to communicate that “the community’s gathering for worship . . . is not the place to satisfy one’s hunger and eat one’s fill. For that there are houses; that one can and should do at home.” What Hofius is saying is no doubt true: Paul wants the Corinthians to distinguish between a private meal and the Lord’s Supper. Nevertheless, he does instruct those who are hungry to eat at home before coming to the Lord’s Supper, and the mere passing nature of Paul’s directive in 11:34 is most intelligible on the assumption that the Brotritus and the Kelchritus are not separated from each other by an ordinary meal. This modification in the Corinthians’ observance of the Lord’s Supper would be only moderately disruptive of procedure if the Brotritus and the Kelchritus already form a liturgical unit set off from the ordinary meal, much less than if they are not. That Paul gives no hint that following his advice would have far-reaching consequences for the Corinthians’ observance of the Lord’s Supper is significant.

42. The argument that Paul gives no indication that his advice εἴ τις πεινᾷ, ἐν οἶκῳ ἐσθιέτω would radically change the character of the Lord’s Supper does not damage the eranos hypothesis, because on this hypothesis Paul’s advice aims to eliminate only the meal eaten at first tables, which is de facto a private meal. Doing so would solve the problem of the poor being hungry, because the wealthy could not start eating until everyone was present.


44. Hofius, “Herrenmahl und Herrenmahlparadosis,” 390; idem, “Social Integration and Sacramental Activity,” 95. The original German is “Die gottesdienstliche Versammlung der Gemeinde ist . . . nicht der Ort, seinen Hunger zu stillen und sich satzuzessen,—dafür gibt es Häuser, das kann und soll man zu Hause tun.”

45. This suggests that Theissen’s interpretation of the phrase ἐν τῷ φαγεῖν in his reconstruction of the Lord’s Supper in Corinth is wrong. He bases his conclusion that there are two
Are the “have-nots” expected to bring their own food and drink to the Lord’s Supper (Q2)? The hypotheses that assume that the poor are expected to bring contributions to the Lord’s Supper founder on the fact that the poor are hungry.\textsuperscript{46} The existence of the hungry at the Lord’s Supper is only satisfactorily explained on the assumption that, when they arrive, expecting to be fed, those from the lower strata of Corinthian society find only remnants of the ordinary meal. This probably happens frequently enough to cause offense but not enough to change their expectations that they will be fed adequately at the meeting. On the sequential potluck, inhospitable and \textit{eranos} hypotheses, one must assume either that the poor deliberately bring provisions insufficient to satisfy their hunger or that they never have enough food to bring.\textsuperscript{47} The former seems mistaken, because it would be expected that they bring enough to satisfy their own needs; besides, after going hungry once or twice, the poor would make sure that they bring enough food, just in case it happened again. So expecting to pool their resources but discovering that the wealthy have already eaten most of theirs and are now sated, the poor would simply eat what they have brought or maybe pool their resources. In either case, no one would go hungry, even if the food and drink were of a beggarly quality. Besides, if the poor, who form the majority of the members of the Corinthian church (1 Cor 1:26–28), show up to the Lord’s Supper with inadequate provisions, even if the wealthy wait for them and share the food that they have with them, the poor will still be hungry because there will not be enough food for anyone, wealthy or poor. The latter is equally untenable, because it seems inconceivable that even the poorest of the poor in the Corinthian church could not procure enough bread for such an important occasion, at least enough to satisfy his or her hunger for a few hours (11:21). They may be of a lower social rank, but they are not totally destitute.\textsuperscript{48} If they are expected

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phases of the eating of private meals—before the beginning of communal meal and during it—on the phrase \textit{ἐν τῷ φαγεῖν} in 11:21 (“Soziale Integration und Sakramentales Handeln,” 189; idem, “Social Integration and Sacramental Activity,” 153). Because, in his view, this phrase can only denote the communal meal, it follows that the wealthy continue eating their private meals after the communal meal has begun. But if the meal eaten before all have arrived can be considered the communal meal—at least in theory—then the phrase \textit{ἐν τῷ φαγεῖν} can refer to this.

46. Actually, if the poor are expected but are unable to bring their own provisions for the Lord’s Supper, then \textit{ἐκαστὸς} really means only the wealthy. On this topic, see Abraham J. Malherbe, \textit{Social Aspects of Early Christianity} (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), 82–83, 109.

47. On the \textit{eranos} hypothesis, everyone brings something to the meal at second tables with the intention of pooling their resources.

48. Contrary to Winter, \textit{After Paul Left Corinth}, 152; Friesen, “Poverty in Pauline Studies: Beyond the So-called New Consensus,” 349–50. Friesen estimates that 28% of the population of Corinth was “below subsistence level,” some of whom were members of this church in the city (p. 347). He holds that “There were people in the assemblies who did not have enough food for the community meal, and it generated an ongoing problem that Paul decided that he needed to address. We are dealing with at least some saints from category 7 of the poverty scale, and their continuing mistreatment in the congregation was enough of a problem for Paul to intervene” (pp. 349–50). What advocates of this view do not seem to realize is that these destitute members would not be alive for very long if they did not did have adequate resources to provide for themselves a sufficient caloric intake.
to bring their own food, the poor no doubt would bring what they are planning to eat for their evening meal that day.

The argument put forward by adherents of the eranos hypothesis that the poor are expected to bring something to the Lord’s Supper but do not have enough time to put together their food baskets before they come to the meeting is unconvincing.49 The poor are already late for the meeting, so surely they would take a few extra minutes to pack a basket for themselves, because the alternative would be to arrive a few minutes earlier for a meal that has been under way for some time already but be hungry and humiliated for the rest of the evening.50 It seems that the better option is to be a few more minutes late than to go without supper.

In conclusion, it makes better historical sense to postulate that the wealthy meet before the poor arrive and begin to eat from the provisions for the ordinary meal that they have supplied; inconsiderately, but contrary to their expressed intention, they frequently eat and drink so much before the rest have arrived that they inadvertently deprive the later comers of their share of the provisions. As Murphy-O’Connor puts it, “Reinforced by the Roman custom they would then have considered it their due to appropriate the best portions for themselves. Such selfishness would necessarily include a tendency to take just a little more, so that it might happen that nothing was left for the ‘have-nots’ (v. 22), who in their hunger had to be content with the bread and wine provided for the Eucharist.”51 When the wealthy have eaten more than their share of the provisions for the ordinary meal before the poor arrive, regrettably, nothing can be done to rectify the situation. Although this probably troubles at least some of them, as already said, the wealthy can relieve the pangs of conscience with the knowledge that no one is excluded from participation in the more important Brotritus and Kelchritus.52

50. Seneca describes, for example, how in his day—the middle of the first century A.D.—it is the practice of some masters to require that their slaves stand around them at supper time, observing but not eating, forbidden to move or make any sound under penalty of a beating (Epist. mor. ad Luc. 67). Any of the Corinthian Christians who are slaves to these masters would obviously not be able to arrive for the Lord’s Supper until well after the supper hour. In general, the poor Christians in Corinth would be less free in the disposition of their time than the wealthy, more-leisured Christians.
51. Murphy-O’Connor, St. Paul’s Corinth, 161. See Smith and Taussig, Many Tables, 32–33.
52. Further aggravating the problem of the inequitable distribution of food at the Lord’s Supper resulting in the humiliation of the poor might have been the physical setting of the meal. A typical house of the upper class would have a triclinium, designed to hold about nine people, who would recline to eat. If the whole church meets at one such house and the Lord’s Supper is eaten during this time, necessarily some members will be forced to eat in the atrium or even outside. Because the socioeconomic status of the members likely determines the seating arrangement at the Lord’s Supper, it is not difficult to imagine the relegation of members of the lower social strata, who arrive for the meal some time after the wealthy, to “second-class facilities” (Murphy-O’Connor, St. Paul’s Corinth, 159).
A possible objection to this explanation of the hunger of the poor is that the wealthy probably constitute such a small minority in the church that it seems incredible that this group would have the physical capacity to eat enough of the provisions that they have provided for the ordinary meal to cause the kind of problem that Paul describes (see 1 Cor 1:26: “not many”). It is probably the case, however, that not all those who contribute nothing to the ordinary meal go hungry, but only those who are the latest to arrive. The general effect, however, is to humiliate all those of the lower strata of society, who must rely on the hospitality of their social superiors because they are confronted with the fact of their social inferiority.

To whom does ἕκαστος refer in 11:21 (Q3)? What Paul means by ἕκαστος is “each of you”; what remains unknown is the exact identity of the “you.” The debate has focused on whether Paul could have used ἕκαστος restrictively, to denote a subgroup within the Corinthian church. The sequential-sponsored, sequential-potluck, private-meal, and eranos hypotheses posit that ἕκαστος is used restrictively, while in the inhospitable hypothesis it is comprehensive of all the Corinthian believers. (The eranos hypothesis posits that it is the meal at first tables that each of the wealthy προλαμβάνει.) In his writings, Paul uses ἕκαστος to mean each and every person (e.g., Rom 2:6; 1 Cor 12:7, 18; 2 Cor 5:10), sometimes with a partitive genitive (e.g., Rom 14:12; 1 Cor 15:38, 16:2) and sometimes strengthened by being conjoined with εἷς (1 Thess 2:11, 2 Thess 1:3, 1 Cor 12:18, Eph 4:7). Some maintain, however, that on two occasions Paul may use ἕκαστος with a more restrictive meaning, for the purpose of emphasis. If this is true, then Paul’s use of ἕκαστος in 11:17 may not denote all of those present for the Lord’s Supper.53

In 1 Cor 1:12, although he writes that ‘each of you (ἕκαστος ὑμῶν) says, ‘I am of Paul’ or ‘I am of Apollo’ or ‘I am of Cephas’ or ‘I am of Christ,’” he may mean not each and every Corinthian believer but only some. Likewise, when he says that, when the Corinthians gather together, “Each (ἕκαστος) has a psalm, a teaching, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation,” he may intend to convey not that every single person gathered has at least one of these items to contribute but, again, that only some do. It should be pointed out, nevertheless, that it is not beyond a reasonable doubt that these two examples are intended to be restrictive.

Hofius concedes that the statement in 14:26 may be an exaggeration, but points out that whenever he (and the NT writers in general) uses ἕκαστος with εἷς, Paul always intends it to be understood literally and in a comprehensive sense (Rom 14:5; 1 Cor 3:8; 7:2, 7; 12:11; 15:23, 38; Gal 6:5; see also Matt 25:15; Luke 6:44; John 16:32; Acts 2:6, 8; Jas 1:14).54 For


Hofius, there is no doubt that in 11:21 Paul means that every one of the Corinthians who assembles for the Lord’s Supper brings and consumes his or her own meal. He finds a confirmation of his interpretation of 1 Cor 11:21 in the use of ἕκαστος found in Eratosthenes’ criticism of a banquet (συνοίκία) connected with the festival known as Lagynophoria: “Each one drinks from his own flask, which he has brought along.”

It would appear, however, that whether Paul ever uses ἕκαστος in a restrictive sense is irrelevant to a determination of the referent of ἕκαστος in 11:21. There is a pervasive ambiguity in 1 Cor 11:17–34, owing to the fact that sometimes Paul has in view those who are responsible for the abuses at the Lord’s Supper, while at other times he has in view the entire church, the victims and the victimizers. When he asks rhetorically in 11:22 “Do you not have houses in which to eat? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate the have-nots? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you?” it is clear that he is addressing only the wealthy, those responsible for the humiliation of the poor. But when he writes in 11:18 that he has heard that there exist divisions “among you” (ἐν ὑμῖν), he means by “you” all of those who are participants in the Lord’s Supper. The same is true of the “you” that occurs in 11:20: “When you come together (Συνερχομένων . . . ὑμῶν) it is not the Lord’s Supper that you eat.” This vacillation is inevitable, because Paul is attempting to sort out a problem that is precipitated by some but affects all. So when Paul writes that ἕκαστος γὰρ τὸ ἴδιον δεῖπνον προλαμβάνει, the question is whether Paul has in view “each of the wealthy” or “each of those who are participants.” Both are legitimate possibilities, between which the context must decide.

From the context, it seems that ἕκαστος can only mean each of the wealthy. As argued earlier, there is no other credible explanation for the fact that the poor are hungry and consequently humiliated at the Lord’s Supper (11:22) than that they expect to be fed by the generosity of the wealthy members, but are disappointed. If so, then ἕκαστος can only mean each of the wealthy, because they alone bring food and drink to the Lord’s Supper. In other words, only the wealthy “go ahead” (προλαμβάνω) with their meals because only they have food to eat and wine to drink. A poor member of the Corinthian church would have no food or drink so he or she cannot τὸ ἴδιον δεῖπνον προλαμβάνει. This conclusion with its warrant supports the sequential-sponsored and private-meal hypotheses.

What does the verb προλαμβάνει in 11:21 mean and what does Paul mean by his admonition συνερχόμενοι εἰς τὸ φαγεῖν ἀλλήλους ἐκδέχσθε (Q4)? These two questions are inseparably linked and must be considered together. Paul relates that each of the wealthy Corinthian believers τὸ ἴδιον δεῖπνον


56. Lindemann assumes that Paul is not addressing the rich exclusively in 1 Cor 11:20–22 because he gives no indication that he has changed addressees (Erste Korintherbrief, 253); see Theissen, “Social Conflicts in the Corinthian Church,” 381 n. 25.
The question is whether προλαμβάνει should have a temporal sense meaning “to go ahead with” or be understood as an intensified form of λαμβάνει. According to the inhospitable hypothesis, the latter is the case, whereas the other four hypotheses interpret the verb as having a temporal sense. Unfortunately, the verb προλαμβάνω occurs only one other time in the Pauline corpus (Gal 6:1) and is used in a different sense (προλαμβάνομαι = “to be seized”), so that it sheds no light on Paul’s use of the word in 1 Cor 11:21 (see Wis 17:16; Pãxy, 928.8–9). Outside the Pauline corpus, it occurs in Mark 14:8, where it does have a temporal sense but is not used in a context of eating. Parallel to its use in 1 Cor 11:21, the verb προλαμβάνω, however, occurs with food as its object in an inscription found on a stele from the temple of Asclepius at Epidaurus; in this text, it functions as a near-synonym for λαμβάνω, with no temporal sense: “When I came into the kingdom, he [the god] commanded me . . . to take for myself cheese and bread (πυρόν καὶ ἄρτον προλαβεῖν), to take for myself lemon peels (κιτρίου προλαμβάνει τά ἄκρα) . . . to take for myself milk and honey (γάλα μετὰ μέλιτος προλαβεῖν).” If his use of προλαμβάνομαι is interpreted in light of its use in this inscription, Paul’s meaning would likewise have no temporal sense.

But the question still remains whether this is Paul’s intended meaning. Hofius argues that the context demands that προλαμβάνει in 1 Cor 11:21 be given no temporal shading of meaning. According to him, unless προλαμβάνει is translated in this way, three serious exegetical problems result. First, ἕκαστος is forced to take on an imprecise meaning, so that it no longer means literally each one but means only the wealthy, who assemble before the poor arrive. Second, Hofius holds that the adverbial phrase ἐν τῷ φαγεῖν most naturally denotes the eating of the common meal comprising both the wealthy and the poor; but if ἕκαστος means only “each of the wealthy,” then the adverbial phrase cannot have this meaning. Third, an incongruence results between the clause ἕκαστος γὰρ τὸ τίδον δειπνον προλαμβάνει ἐν τῷ φαγεῖν and what follows and is joined to it by the consecutive use of καὶ—ὁς μὲν πεινᾷ, ὁς δὲ μεθύει—when one assumes that ἕκαστος means only each of the wealthy, who eat before the other, less-well-to-do members arrive. Because the clause ὃς μὲν πεινᾷ, ὃς δὲ μεθύει intends the entire group, constituted by both the wealthy and the poor, according to Hofius, the previous clause must also: “Inasmuch as ἕκαστος can refer only to the well-to-do, ὃς μὲν . . . ὃς δὲ cannot be understood as unpacking ἕκαστος.”

58. See Fee, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, 542.
59. Hofius, “Herrenmahl und Herrenmahlparadosis,” 385; idem, “The Lord’s Supper and the Lord’s Supper Tradition,” 90. The original German is “Da sich ἕκαστος lediglich auf die Gutsituierten beziehen soll, kann ὃς μὲν . . . ὃς δὲ nicht als Explikation von ἕκαστος begriffen werden.”
The exegetical difficulties raised by Hofius are not as serious as he thinks, and so do not eliminate the possibility of translating προλαμβάνει in 11:21 with the temporal sense of “to go ahead with.” First, as established above, Paul means by ἕκαστος “each of you wealthy,” which is no departure from a literal or precise use of the word, because ἕκαστος still has a comprehensive sense, insofar as it refers to all the members of a particular group. Second, if ἕκαστος means “each of the wealthy,” the adverbial phrase ἐν τῷ φαγεῖν specifies the time when they are eating. But, contrary to Hofius, this phrase can still mean “during the common meal,” because, even if the wealthy are eating before all have arrived, what they are eating is the common meal. (In fact, on the sequential-sponsored and sequential-potluck hypotheses, this is precisely the problem.) Finally, there is no incongruence between ἕκαστος γὰρ τὸ ἵδιον δεξίουν προλαμβάνει ἐν τῷ φαγεῖν and the next clause, καὶ ὁι μὲν πεινᾷ, ὁι δὲ μεθύει. By using the consecutive καὶ, Paul intends the latter to be understood as the consequence of the former: the result of the misdeeds of each of the wealthy at the Lord’s Supper is that some (the poor) are hungry while others (the wealthy) are sated (“drunk”).

The question of whether προλαμβάνει should be translated with a temporal sense is tied to a determination of what Paul means by συνερχόμενοι εἰς τὸ φαγεῖν ἀλλήλους ἐκδέχσθε. The meaning of the latter determines the meaning of the former. The verb ἐκδέχομαι can mean either “to receive, be hospitable” or “to wait for, expect.”60 Again, according to the inhospitable hypothesis, Paul means the former, whereas the other four hypotheses opt for the latter. Two data have relevance for determining what Paul means by ἀλλήλους ἐκδέχομαι. First, the only other occurrence of the verb ἐκδέχομαι in the Pauline corpus has the meaning “to wait for”: “Send him [Timothy] in peace, in order that he come to me, for I am waiting for him (ἐκδέχομαι γὰρ αὐτόν) with the brothers” (1 Cor 16:11). Although one should not assume that Paul could not use it polyvalently, the fact that the only other occurrence of ἐκδέχομαι in his extant writings has the meaning of “to wait for” is at least prima facie evidence that its other occurrence in 11:33 has the same meaning. Second, as argued earlier, Paul’s analysis of the problem is that each of the wealthy begins to eat from the provisions that he or she has supplied before everyone has arrived, with the result that they are sated, whereas the latest comers remain hungry, resulting in the humiliation of all the poor.61 Given this reconstruction of the problem, Paul’s admonition


61. Stuhlmacher agrees that “Maßgebliche Leute in der Gemeinde den Genuß von Brot und Wein zum Beschluß des Herrenmahls für viel wichtiger als die sich im Gemeindemahl insgesamt ausdrückende gegenseitige Gemeinschaft aller hielten, begannen sie mit der Sät-
in 11:33 συνερχόμενοι εἰς τὸ φαγεῖν ἀλλήλους ἐκδέχσθε makes the most sense when translated: “When you come together to eat the Lord’s Supper, wait for one another before you start eating.”62 This is his solution to the problem.63 From this, it follows that the verb προλαμβάνει in 11:21 should have the temporal sense of “to go ahead with.”

Paul advises that, if the wealthy are so hungry that they cannot wait for all to arrive, they should eat at home: εἴ τις πεινᾷ, ἐν οἴκῳ ἐσθιέτω.64 These people will no doubt also eat at the common meal held before the Brotritus and the Kelchritus but likely will eat much less than before. Probably, Paul does not intend this directive to be a command but intends only a recommendation, made in light of the lack of self-control on the part of some. But, as already pointed out, Paul’s advice does prepare the way for the complete separation of the ordinary meal from the Brotritus and Kelchritus, because the expectation that people come to the meeting already fed would gradually take hold.65

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62. Hofius writes, “Die Worte συνερχόμενοι εἰς τὸ φαγεῖν V. 33 setzen ebenso wie die Wendung ἐν τῷ φαγεῖν V. 21 voraus, daß alle Gemeindeglieder beim ‘Essen’ beisammen sind” (“Herrenmahl und Herrenmahlpardosis,” 389; idem, “The Lord’s Supper and the Lord’s Supper Tradition,” 94). He believes that this supports his interpretation of ἀλλήλους ἐκδέχσθε as “receive one another warmly,” that is, without a temporal sense. But Paul does not have to be interpreted as implying that no eating takes place before every last participant has arrived. Rather, he is advising that, when the Corinthians gather together to eat the Lord’s Supper, those who arrive first should wait for the rest to arrive before beginning the common meal, contrary to the practice described in 1 Cor 11:21a.

63. Wolff, Der erste Brief des Paulus an die Korinther, 81.

64. Because the wealthy in the Corinthian church sponsor the ordinary meal eaten before what will later be known as the Eucharist, probably the meal is prepared by their household servants. If so, A. Clark Wire’s conclusion that the women members of the Corinthian church—including prophets—prepare the meal is off the mark (The Corinthian Women Prophets: A Reconstruction through Paul’s Rhetoric [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990], 102–10). She argues that the Lord’s Supper as celebrated by the Corinthians is an “informal feast” (p. 110), so that there is “no effective caste system” (p. 108) in place that relegates women to a social status inferior to that of the men. Rather, the women by virtue of their role as cooks gain “a certain prominence,” because they are the first to arrive for the Lord’s Supper (p. 108). (The informality of the celebration of Lord’s Supper also occasionally results in running out of food, of which Paul speaks in 1 Cor 11:21; the women who cook the meals are among those who “go ahead” with their meals.) According to A. Clark Wire, Paul’s admonition to eat at home before coming to the Lord’s Supper would undermine the social status of these women in the church, because they, according to the social expectation of the times, would have to stay home and prepare food for their own families, which would then result in their coming to the Lord’s Supper much later than everyone else. (The greater of the two evils of the demotion in social status of these women or the occasional running short of provisions, in A. Clark Wire’s view, seems to be the former.) But if, as is more likely, household servants cook the meal, then A. Clark Wire’s reconstruction is untenable.

65. Bartsch unifies 1 Cor 8–11 under the theme of the need for ἐγκράτεια. Relating 1 Cor 10 to 1 Cor 11:17–34, he concludes that, in Paul’s view, the lack of self-control on the part of
What gives τὸ ἴδιον δεῖπνον consumed by ἔκαστος its character as ἴδιον, and how does τὸ ἴδιον δεῖπνον differ from τὸ κυριακὸν δεῖπνον (Q5)? Paul designates the meal that each of wealthy begins to eat before the poor arrive as τὸ ἴδιον δεῖπνον and not the Lord’s Supper (τὸ κυριακὸν δεῖπνον). As used in 1 Cor 11:21, the adjective ἴδιος denotes private ownership, in contrast to what is public property. The question that needs to be addressed is what gives this meal the character of being private. Contrary to Hofius’s inhospitable hypothesis, it is improbable that Paul’s use of τὸ ἴδιον δεῖπνον implies that each member of the Corinthian church brings his or her own meal, nor is Theissen’s private meal hypothesis correct when it posits that Paul means the collective “private meal” from which each of the wealthy eats in the presence of the poor. Likewise, because it was determined that an ordinary meal probably did not separate the Brotritus and the Kelchritus from each other, the eranos hypothesis that by τὸ ἴδιον δεῖπνον Paul is referring to the meal at “First Tables” has nothing to commend it. Rather, as the sequential sponsored and sequential potluck hypotheses argue, Paul’s phrase τὸ ἴδιον δεῖπνον is intended to communicate that, insofar as the poor, because of their absence, have no opportunity to avail themselves of the provisions brought by the wealthy for the Lord’s Supper, the meal—comprised of these provisions—taken by each of the wealthy before the poor arrive is de facto a “private” (ἴδιον) meal. The wealthy wrongly handle the provisions that they have brought as if they were still private property; otherwise, they would not begin eating before all have arrived and would not take more than their share. Only when all have equal access to these provisions will the meals assembled from them be τὸ κυριακὸν δεῖπνον.66 This will only happen when the wealthy wait for the poor to arrive. Eratosthenes, as cited earlier, criticizes as vulgar the requirement that each guests brings his own flask of wine to be drunk at the banquet: “And each drinks from his

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66. According to Theissen, Paul’s admonition in 11:33 implies that some begin eating prematurely, with the result that those who come later are disadvantaged. But he interprets 11:21 to mean that the “private meal” of the wealthy precedes the Lord’s Supper, which commences only with the Brotritus and from which no one is excluded. In his own words, “ Während es nach v 33 so aussieht, als habe man mit dem Gemeinschaftsmahl vorzeitig begonnen, so daß später Kommende zu kurz kamen, legt v 21 den Gedanke nahe, einige Christen hätten mit ihren Privatmahl schon vorher begonnen, das Gemeinschaftessen sei erst später gefolgt. In diesem Falle wären die später Kommenden weniger benachteilt! ” (“Soziale Integration und Sakramentales Handeln,” 186–87; ET “Social Integration and Sacramental Activity,” 151). Theissen’s only recourse is to choose between 11:21 and 11:33, and he opts for 11:21. But if there is no ordinary meal between the Brotritus and the Kelchritus, this alleged incongruity disappears. The wealthy begin eating the common meal before all have arrived. On this hypothesis, 1 Cor 11:21 should not be taken to imply that the wealthy eat from private meals before the onset of the common meal. Rather, the meals consumed by the wealthy at what is supposed to be the common meal de facto become private meals for the reasons already mentioned.
The wine brought to the banquet is not to be offered as common fare but is intended only for private consumption, which is why it is designated as ἰδίας. The similarity between Paul's description of the Corinthians' errant celebration of the Lord's Supper and Eratosthenes's banquet is that in both the qualifier ἰδίας stands in contrast to what is public property and equally accessible to all. The difference is that the wealthy in the Corinthian church consume their private meals before the poor have arrived, not in their presence.

Do the wealthy and the poor eat from a different menu (Q6)? All the hypotheses except the sequential sponsored hypothesis assume that, in part at least, what Paul finds humiliating to the poor and therefore reprehensible is the fact that the wealthy not only consume more food and drink but eat from a different menu. According to the private meal hypothesis, Paul's criticism of the wealthy is precisely that they consume more than just the bread and wine offered to the poor. Theissen identifies this “private meal” as the cause of the humiliation of the poor. The inhospitable hypothesis posits that Paul's objection to the Corinthian celebration of the Lord's Supper is the fact that the wealthy will not make their more-than-sufficient provisions available to the poor as common fare. Hofius argues that this is what Paul means to correct when he admonishes the Corinthians: ἀλλήλους ἐκδέχσθε. Likewise, the sequential potluck hypothesis reconstructs the error in the celebration of the Lord's Supper as the wealthy not being willing to pool their resources with the meager contributions of the poor. Finally, in the eranos hypothesis, the wealthy eat two potluck meals, one of which is restricted to their social class (first tables). No doubt their contributions to the meal at second tables would be much less generous.

Unfortunately, there is nothing in Paul's letter that can be used as evidence that it is the practice of the wealthy in the Corinthian church to eat from a different and better menu than the poor. Although it is an argument from silence, it is a telling argument nonetheless that Paul does not criticize

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67. καὶ ἐξ ἰδίας ἐκαστος λαγύνου ... πίνουσιν (FGH 241, frg. 16).
68. Similarly, in JosAs 7:1 it is said that, because he never ate with the Egyptians, they set before Joseph τράπεζα κατ᾽ ἰδίαν. In other words, what Joseph eats is a “private meal.” According to Plutarch, a certain Hagias criticizes the practice of giving individual portions at a banquet, as opposed to sharing everything in common; he designates the food consumed under this sort of arrangement as ἰδίον: “his own table.” Plutarch later encapsulates the essence of the criticism in an adage: ἀλλ᾽ ὄπου τὸ ἴδιόν ἔστιν, ἀπόλυται τὸ κοινόν (Quaestiones Conviviales II, 10, 2). “Private meals” destroy fellowship. See Theissen, “Soziale Integration und Sakramentales Handeln,” 182–86; idem, “Social Integration and Sacramental Activity,” 147–51; Klauck, Herrenmahl und hellenistischer Kult, 292 n. 38.
69. This sort of practice was accepted in the Roman world. This is known primarily from a dissenting minority who took exception to this social convention (Pliny, Epistulae II. 6; Martial, Epigrammata, III.60; I.20; see also IV. 85; VI. 11; X. 49; Juvenal, Satura V). See Theissen, “Soziale Integration und Sakramentales Handeln,” 189–200; Klauck, Herrenmahl und hellenistischer Kult, 293–94; Murphy-O’Connor, St. Paul’s Corinth, 159–60; Coutsoumpos, Paul and the Lord’s Supper, 105). This practice seems also to have been accepted in early rabbinic circles. In order to illustrate the point of God’s love for Israel, R. Joshua b. Korchah uses the mashal of a king’s honoring a friend by giving him a choice portion (Sipre Deut 53).
the wealthy for eating from a better menu than the “have-nots.” Rather, he focuses on the fact that the poor are hungry (“And some are hungry”), which suggests that they share a common menu with the wealthy but do not receive enough of the common provisions, of whatever these consist beyond the perfunctory bread and wine. Now it is arguable that certain delicacies that the wealthy provide would be gone long before those of lower social strata make their appearance, so that they are denied access to these preferred items. But this result would be a function of eating before all the poor arrive, not of a deliberately selective menu.

**CONCLUSION**

In summary, an ordinary meal (Sättigungsmahl) does not separate the Bretritus and the Kelchritus from each other (Q1), and the “have-nots” come to the Lord’s Supper expecting to be supplied with adequate amounts of food and drink (Q2). By the term ἐκαστος in 11:21, Paul refers to each of the wealthy (Q3). The verb προλαμβάνει in 11:21 has the temporal sense of “to go ahead with,” and by his admonition συνερχόμενοι εἰς τὸ φαγεῖν ἀλλήλους ἕκαστος Paul means for the wealthy to wait for the poor before they start eating (Q4). What gives τὸ ἴδιον δεῖπνον consumed by each of the wealthy its character as ἴδιον is that, because of their absence, the poor have no opportunity to avail themselves of the provisions brought by the wealthy. Only when all have equal access to these provisions will the meals assembled from them be τὸ κυριακὸν δεῖπνον (Q5). Finally, it is probable that the wealthy and the poor eat from the same menu (Q6). Of the five hypotheses, the one that proves to be the most convincing is the sequential-sponsored hypothesis. As a historical reconstruction, only it incorporates the data from the correct answers to the six exegetical and historical questions, as demonstrated in table 1.

In conclusion, the wealthy Christians in Corinth do not set out to deprive some of the poor of food at the Lord’s Supper. Rather, this is an indirect consequence of their beginning to eat the ordinary meal preceding the Bretritus and Kelchritus before all have arrived. As patrons of the community, in conformity with Roman custom, they often appropriate more than their share of the provisions that they have supplied for the meal. Thus, it frequently happens that there is not enough food for the latest comers, although they are still able to partake of the bread and the wine used in

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what later would become known as the Eucharist. In Paul’s estimation, the effect is to humiliate all of those who must rely on the hospitality of their social superiors, because they are confronted with the fact of their social inferiority. He admonishes the wealthy to make social distinctions as invisible as possible when the church meets together; practically, this means that they must share the provisions equally with the poor.