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KOINONIA: THE GENESIS OF THE PAULINE CONSTRUCT

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A Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of Arts University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, for the Degree of Master of Arts.

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Abstract

The term *koinonia*, as found in the New Testament, is used predominantly by Paul, who does so with reference to several contexts within the so-called Pauline communities of the Mediterranean area. In order to make the research into such a broad subject more workable, the focus of the dissertation is on the most significant context in which Paul uses the word *koinonia*, the Christian common meal (1 Corinthians 10:16). There are several possible interpretations of *koinonia*, and what has emerged from past research is that the meaning of *koinonia* cannot be determined without reference to the social context. In this dissertation we conduct a socio-historical investigation of the context of the Christian community in Corinth, and show that the Christian community was a social group, which like other social groups, was tied into the social organisation of Roman Corinth. Insights from the social context shed light on the Christian meal and contribute to our understanding of the divisions in the Corinthian community, and why Paul uses the term *koinonia* in that context. The Greek concept of *koinonia* carried a sense of equality and friendship expressed especially in meal traditions, and Paul relies on this ideal in applying *koinonia* to the Christian meal. He uses the term as part of his challenge to the socially powerful in the Christian community in Corinth, who were tied into a patron-client ideology that was threatening the life of the community. Paul formulates an understanding of *koinonia* that relies on the Greek heritage of the term, but he adds his own unique aspects drawn from his Christology, and as such Paul's *koinonia*, as he uses it in the Christian meal, has a rich and broad meaning, possibly more so than has been imputed by scholars thus far.

Declaration

I declare that this dissertation is my own, unaided work. It is being submitted for the degree of Master of Arts in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other University.

Norma Anne Corry ....N A Corry.....

Date 11-4-97

Preface

This study originated out of an awareness on my part that there was uncertinty as to what the term *koinōnia* meant. In ordinary Christian circles *koinōnia* was often interpreted as fellowship, and although some of the Christian churches with which I have had contact talked about Christian fellowship in terms of community, there was some vagueness about what fellowship or community was. Much of what was termed fellowship was drinking coffee or tea after church or socialising in some way. There developed in me a growing suspicion that those of us who had anything to do with the Christian church lacked tangible insights as to what fellowship involved, what was understood by *koinōnia*, or what community meant in real terms. Added to that awareness was a conviction that a deeper understanding of community was becoming an urgent necessity in our context, South Africa. Those two factors, plus my own interest in biblical interpretation, and a current interest in the first-century world of the Christian communities, have all combined to give birth to this study.

Acknowledgements

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Secondly, thanks are due to members of the Department of Religious Studies for their sympathetic interest in my progress. Then I want to thank my mother, who has always believed in me, and the rest of my family and my friends, particularly my Christian friends who have supported me with love and much prayer, and who have allowed me to just be! I am grateful especially to Pam Nicol for making her computer available before I purchased my own, and to both Pam and Bill for their constant friendship and support, and for coaxing me away from my books for much needed times of relaxation.

As a Christian, I want to offer special thanks to God.

This dissertation would not have been completed without financial assistance. I would like to thank the University of the Witwatersrand for their financial assistance in the form of the Senior Bursary. The financial assistance of the Centre for Science Development is hereby acknowledged. Opinions expressed and conclusions arrived at are those of the author and are not necessarily to be attributed to the Centre for Science Development. All biblical references in English are taken from the New International version of the Bible. It has proved convenient to use a transliteration of the Greek text based on the United Bible Societies edition of the Nestle-Aland text.

ABBREVIATIONS

AV	The Authorised (King James) Version
BJ	Josephus, *Bellum Judaicum*
Ebr	Philo, *De Ebrietate*
Ench	Epictetus, *Enchiridion*
Ep	Pliny, *Epistulae*
Ep	Seneca, *Epistulae*
EthNic	Aristotle, *Ethica Nicomarchea*
Il	Homer, *Iliad*
JBL	Journal of Biblical Literature
JR	Journal of Religion
JRH	Journal of Religious History
Leg	Plato, *Leges*
Men	Plautus, *Meno*
NIDNTT	New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology
NIV	New International Version
NTS	New Testament Studies
Od	Homer, *Odyssey*
Phaedr	Plato, *Phaedrus*
Pol	Aristotle, *Politica*
QConv	Josephus, *Questiones Convivalves*
Resp	Plato, *Respublica*
RSV	Revised Standard Version
Sat	Petronius, *Satyricon*
SBL	Society of Biblical Literature
SpecLeg	Philo, *De Specialibus Legibus*
TDNT	Theological Dictionary of the New Testament
TNT	The Translators New Testament

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CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION

1.0 Conceptions of *Koinōnia*

> The unity of the Church to which we are called is a *koinónia* given and expressed in the common confession of apostolic faith; a common sacramental life entered by the one baptism and celebrated together in one eucharistic fellowship; a common life in which members and ministries are mutually recognized and reconciled; and a common mission witnessing to all people to the gospel of God's grace and serving the whole of creation (Gassmann & Radano 1993:2).

So reads one of the components of The Canberra Statement, a statement put out by the 1993 Faith and Order conference (number 163). The essence of the document reflects that the discussions at the conference centred on ecumenism, and indeed, subsequent Faith and Order conferences had the same focus. The 1994 conference reached the conclusion that the term *koinōnia* is best interpreted as "communion", that is, the coming together of the various groups of the Christian church so that they are in communion with each other and working for a common cause (see Best & Gassmann 1994:271).

In popular Christian thinking the term *koinōnia* has come to be associated with the concept of community. A reference in Acts (2:42), in which the word *koinōnia* is found, and others (for example, Acts 4:32) have been used to create a picture of the early Church as a sharing community, a community in which members share all things together and have all things in common, both material and spiritual.

Another popular conception of the term *koinōnia* is that it is "fellowship", which is described variously by church-goers as drinking a cup of coffee together after a church service, meeting in someone's home for Bible study, sharing a meal together, bird-watching, socialising together at a function. Often the term *koinōnia* has been further used in some churches as a metynomy for the eucharist or service of communion.

So the term *koinōnia* in popular Christian thinking has been used variously of ecumenism, relationships, the early church community, fellowship and even the eucharist. But what does the word really mean? Part of our intention in this study is to arrive at an understanding of the word in the New Testament as used by Paul. If we start with the dictionary meanings we see that a range of meanings is given to the word *koinōnia* and cognates.

2.0 Lexicon References to *Koinōnia*

Lexicons trace the term *koinōnia* to the stem *koinos* meaning common, or to have in common, and also as common in the sense of profane or unclean (Newman 1971:101). This broad sense of the stem *koinos* should suggest that we need to be cautious about determining the meaning of *koinōnia*. In Classical Greek use one of the cognates of *koinos*, that is *koinōnos*, could mean a partner or sharer as well as a companion or an accomplice (see Liddell & Scott 1940:970). A wide range of meaning can be attributed to the verb *koinōneo*, constructed from *koinōnos*. Liddell and Scott give the meaning of *koinōneo* as share, take part, participate, contribute, give a share, share in common with others (for example, business partnership or in community), and even to share in an opinion (1940:969).

In the New Testament *koinōnos* is given the more specific meaning of partner or sharer, and *koinōneo* is translated as share, give a share, take part, participate, and contribute (Newman 1971:102, 169). The basic meanings of *koinonia*, an abstract noun constructed from *koinōnos* and *koinōneo*, found in Classical Greek are also used of the term in the New Testament, with minor variations. The meaning of *koinōnia* in Classical Greek use is given by Liddell and Scott as communion, association, partnership, joint-ownership and fellowship (1940:970). Newman translates *koinōnia* as fellowship, a close mutual relationship, participation or sharing in, partnership, contribution or gift (1971:101).

What becomes evident is that the term *koinōnia* and cognates has several meanings and cannot be confined to one particular one. So clearly the context of the word is essential so as to choose between these varied meanings.

3.0 The Semantic Domain of *Koinōnia*

Louw and Nida in their Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament (1989) identify several words that are similar in meaning to *koinōnia*. The words are located in two domains: Association and Possess, Transfer, Exchange.

In the domain Possess, Transfer, Exchange, *koinonia* is found in the subdomain Give. As a derivative of *koinōneo* it is translated "to share", with the idea of mutual participation, as it is found in Galatians 6:6 and 2 Corinthians 8:4. It is translated "willing gift, ready contribution" as found in Romans 15:26. Apart from the words meaning "give or to give" (such as *didōmi, dōreomai, metreo*), a selection of words found in the same subdomain mean:

> "to provide what is lacking, to make up for" (*anaplēroō*) 1 Corinthians 16:17
> "to make available, to provide, to present to" (*paristemi*) Acts 23:24, Romans 12:1, 2 Corinthians 11:2
> "to distribute, to give to each in turn, distribution" (*diamerizō*) Mark 6:41, Acts 2:45, Hebrews 2:4
> "to repay, to return, to pay back" (*antimetreō*) Luke 6:38 (see Louw & Nida 1989:566-572).

In the subdomain associate, the meaning given to *koinōnia* is "close association, fellowship", as it is found in 1 John 1:3 and 1 Corinthians 1:9 (Louw & Nida 1989:446). The same subdomain contains a word meaning "partnership, sharing" (*metecho*), as it is found in 2 Corinthians 6:14. Located there, too, is the noun *koinōnos*, meaning "partner, associate, one who joins with", and the noun meaning "companion, partner" (*metecho*). There are also words closely allied to the idea of close association:

> "to stay closely to, to associate closely with" (*proskartereō*) Acts 8:13

"to associate, to be in the company of, to be involved with, association" (*synanamignymi*) 1 Corinthians 5:9

"to eat together, to associate in a meal" (*synanakeimai*) Matthew 9:10

Also in that subdomain are words that mean "companion, acquaintance and friend" (*etairos, gnostos, syntrophos, philē and philos*) (see Louw & Nida 1989:446-448).

So we can see that *koinonia* is a word that could have many nuances and also many companion words of similar meaning. It includes the notion of friendship, companionship, association, and partnership, but also contains the sense of giving, providing and contributing.

4.0 *Koinonia* in the Biblical Texts

The word *koinonia* is a New Testament word. It appears minimally in the Old Testament, there being only one instance where it is used, namely in Leviticus (6:2). This reference deals with instructions on sacrifices, and particularly the guilt offering. The meaning of the word in its context is with reference to goods that are left with a neighbour. Its use is to do with community of property: the actions of the neighbour in whose care the goods are left constitutes sin because the neighbour does not look after the goods - so a guilt offering must be made and the goods returned, with interest, to the original owner (see Hauck 1964:800).

Generally, in the LXX the *koinon-* group is used with reference to social situations on a human level. For instance, it is used in Deutero-Isaiah to describe a close partnership between those who craft idols and the finished product (*koinonountes* Isaiah 44:11, cf Hosea 4:17 - *metechos*). It is used in a derogatory sense to contrast the futility of crafting an idol from wood which is also used to make fire, and the meaningful craftsmanship of God who creates both the craftsman and the material for his task. In Malachi it is used with reference to a marriage partnership (Malachi 2:15 *koinonos*). What is unique about the Old Testament usage of the *koinon-* group is the absence of use with reference to God. It is used to describe relationships on a human level but never between humans and God (see further Hauck 1964:801-2).

4.1 The Occurrences of *Koinōnia* in the New Testament

When considering all of the references to *koinōnia* in the New Testament, it is obvious that the majority are found in the Pauline material. Thirteen instances in all, out of a total of nineteen in the New Testament occur in the Pauline material:

Romans 15:26
1 Corinthians 1:9, 10:16 (twice)
2 Corinthians 6:14, 8:4, 9:13, 13:13
Galatians 2:9
Philippians 1:5, 2:1, 3:10
Philemon 6

In the non-Pauline material the majority of references are found in 1 John (1:3 [twice], 1:6, 1:7) where it is used to describe the relationship amongst believers and between believers and God, and is translated usually as "fellowship" (AV, NIV, RSV, TNT). It is found also in the letter to the Hebrews (13:16) and is commonly translated as "share" (NIV, RSV, TNT), in terms of an exhortation to do good and share with others. The well-known reference to *koinōnia* in Acts (2:42) is used, as we have already stated, in popular Christian thinking to describe the "common life" (TNT) of believers, or the "fellowship" (AV, NIV, RSV) amongst them.

So from a New Testament perspective, *koinōnia* is primarily a Pauline term, a term which Paul uses in several contexts in his contact with the first-century Christian communities of the Mediterranean area, the so-called Pauline communities. In the Galatians passage (2:9) Paul uses *koinōnia* to describe a partnership or agreement between himself and the Jerusalem church, a partnership expressed by Paul as "the right hand of fellowship", an expression which was used in the Graeco-Roman world to seal a legal agreement (see Sampley 1980:27-8, Cole 1965:69). In his letter to the Romans (15:26) and to the Corinthians (8:4, 9:13) Paul uses the term in the context of the so-called collection for the Christians in Jerusalem. In the letter to Philemon (6) Paul uses *koinōnia* in the context of an appeal for a slave to be restored to his owner. In his letter to the Philippians (1:5, 2:1, 3:10) Paul uses the term to express the relationship amongst believers. The oldest reference in Paul to *koinōnia* occurs in the context of the Christian common meal (1 Corinthians 10:16).

So it is clear that Paul uses *koinōnia* in many contexts in his contact with the Christian communities. Although the contexts in which *koinōnia* is used can be readily identified, settling on the interpretation for the word in each context has not proved to be as easy. For instance, where *koinōnia* is used in the context of the collection, in Romans (15:26) and 2 Corinthians (8:4, 9:13), various meanings have been given to it. In the Romans reference *koinōnia* has been translated in different versions of the biblical text as "contributing or making a contribution" (NIV, RSV, TNT). In chapter eight of Paul's letter to the Corinthians (8:4) *koinōnia* has been translated variously as "taking part in" (RSV), "fellowship" (AV), "sharing in" (NIV, TNT), and in chapter nine as "sharing with" (NIV, TNT), "your contribution" (RSV), "your distribution" (AV). Whereas it is likely that there will be discrepancies of meaning from reference to reference, because the intention of the writer differs in each context, we could probably expect that this should be less so when we are dealing with one specific reference. However, as we have seen, this is not the case. The interpretation given to *koinōnia* in the Romans reference is "contribution", but in the references in 2 Corinthians, especially 8:4, it seems that two or three interpretations are possible. In fact this is an indication of the dilemma in scholarship concerning the meaning and use of *koinōnia* in the New Testament, particularly as used by Paul. An examination of research on *koinōnia* shows that although a degree of consensus has been reached there are still areas of disagreement.

5.0 Research on the Term *Koinōnia*

Research on the term *koinōnia* goes back to the beginning of this century. All of the early studies, that is, in the twenties and thirties, have an etymological focus, with the intention of arriving at the theological meaning of the term. It is not our intention to trace the history of this research as it has been brought together in other instances and to do so again will not serve any purpose (see Sebothoma 1985, Panikulum 1979). Rather we intend to highlight certain patterns that have emerged from research on *koinōnia*.

E P Groenewald was one of the first scholars to emphasise the pliancy of the term *koinonia* as used in Classical and Hellenistic Greek (1932:24).[1] The term according to Groenewald has vague qualities so that in daily use in those periods it could have variable meanings (1932:58). In terms of the Christian common meal Groenewald's suggestion is that *koinonia* has a double dative making the genitive of object exchangeable with the dative (1932:31). Therefore he proposes that *koinonia* could mean both "association with" (community) and "participation in" (communion) (1932:112).

Categories for classifying interpretations of *koinonia* in the New Testament emerged at that time, and the work of H Seesemann (1933) was of particular note to this effect. Seesemann's established three basic categories as follows:

giving a share or contributing to	(Mitteilsamkeit)
having a part in/ participating in	(Anteilhaben)
association, community	(Gemeinschaft)

Seesemann classified the New Testament references to *koinonia* under these categories as follows:

Mitteilsamkeit	*Anteilhaben*	*Gemeinschaft*
Romans 15:26	1 Corinthians 10:16	Acts 2:42
2 Corinthians 9:13	1 Corinthians 1:9	Galatians 2:9
Hebrews 13:16	2 Corinthians 8:4	1 John 1:3,6,7
	Philippians 1:5	
	Philippians 2:1	
	Philippians 3:10	
	Philemon 6	

(1933:24-34, 86)

[1] During this period Y Campbell (1932) also found *koinonia* and cognates to have subtle shades of meaning that could be brought to light through a study of the word in standard Greek usage (1932:351-3).

Seesemann's categories were important in the debate and were used or adapted by subsequent scholars such as D F Hauck[2] (1964). Hauck prefers the word "fellowship" for the third category rather than Seesemann's "association or community". Hauck critiques Seesemann by suggesting that certain of the *koinōnia* references overlap with respect to Seesemann's categories. By this he means, for instance, that Paul's reference to the collection (2 Corinthians 8, 9; Romans 15:26) is both a giving of a share (contribution) and partaking in a share (participation). Hauck suggests that the collection could even be classified under fellowship, the abstract notion of *koinonia*, in the sense that the contribution and participation are concrete evidence of *koinonia* within the community of believers (see Hauck 1964:804-9). He agrees with Seesemann's evaluation that the primary interpretation of *koinōnia* in the New Testament is "to share with someone in something" or "participation in" (Anteilhaben).

Hauck's overall conclusion about the *koinon-* group in the Pauline material is that it has a "directly religious content" (1964:804). What he means is that the term *koinonia* is used by Paul to describe the relationship amongst Christians and between Christians and God. Hauck terms this relationship as "religious fellowship". Hauck suggests that the most important use by Paul of *koinōnia* occurs in the context of the Christian meal, when, he says, the participants become the "companions" of Christ (1964:805).

Seesemann's categories remained as a basis for classifying the occasions when the term *koinōnia* is used in the Pauline material, but opinion differed as to which reference belonged to which category. This can be noted in the work of W Bauer (see Arndt & Gingrich 1979) whose classification of *koinōnia* has been tabulated conveniently by G Panikulam (1979:2).

From Panikulam's presentation of Bauer's classification it can be seen that Bauer adds another category "Erweis bruderlichen Zussammenhaltens" (signs of brotherly unity). We include Bauer's classification to demonstrate the discrepancies on the interpretation of *koinonia*:

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2 Hauck's article on *koinōnia* and cognates was first published in *Theologische Worterbuch zum Neuen Testament* (G Kittel) in 1938.

Gemein-schaft	*Mitteil-samkeit*	*Erweis bruderlichen Zusammenhaltens*	*Anteil-haben*
1 Cor 1:9	2 Cor 9:13	1 Cor 10:16	2 Cor 8:4
2 Cor 6:14	Heb 13:16	Rom 15:26	Phil 3:10
2 Cor 13:13	Phil 2:1		Phm 6
Rom 15:26			
Gal 2:9			
Phil 1:5			
Phil 2:1			
Ac 2:42			
1 Jn 1:3, 6, 7			

A comparison of Bauer's classification with that of Seesemann's shows that, like Hauck, Bauer sees overlap in the meaning of *koinōnia*. For example, Bauer suggests that the instance of *koinōnia* as used by Paul with reference to the collection in his letter to the Romans (15:26), means at once a sign of brotherly unity and of association or community. Bauer places the reference to the Christian common meal (1 Corinthians 10:16) under his additional category, and the meal therefore in his estimation becomes a sign of brotherly unity. What also becomes evident is that whereas Seesemann assigns participation (Antheilaben) as the primary meaning of *koinōnia*, Bauer opts for community or association (Gemeinschaft). Panikulam himself suggests that the primary meaning of *koinōnia* in the New Testament is community (Gemeinschaft), community which emanates from participation in Christ (see Panikulam 1979:2-3).

So it is clear that there is no consensus amongst the five scholars mentioned above on the meaning of *koinōnia* in Paul, and indeed further research will reveal a similar pattern from other scholars (see for instance Nickle 1966, McDermott 1975). The possible meanings of the term are confined by most scholars to Seesemann's three categories, to which Bauer adds his own category, but scholars do not necessarily agree on how the references should be classified. In summary, the primary meaning of the term is suggested by both Hauck and Seesemann to be "participation", whereas Groenewald reckons it can mean both "participation" and "association" or

"community", and Bauer and Panikulum suggest that it means "association" or "community". It has proved difficult for scholars to pin down the interpretation of *koinōnia*. There are three or four categories of meaning agreed by scholars, but no real consensus on how *koinōnia* should be classified.

5.1 1 Corinthians 10:16

For our research we have chosen the reference in 1 Corinthians 10:16 as our focus. The reasons for our choice are not only practical, viz, there is not enough time and space to research each reference used by Paul, but also have to do with the fact that in the research conducted on *koinonia* what has also become evident is that the reference to the Christian common meal, 1 Corinthians 10:16, is significant in Paul's use of the word. This is so for several reasons.

Firstly, it is possible that 1 Corinthians was the earliest letter in which the term occurs in the Pauline material (see Robinson 1976:84, Sebothoma 1985:1). This would suggest that both instances of the term in this letter are important, that is 1 Corinthians 1:9 as well as 1 Corinthians 10:16. However, the reference in chapter 10 is by far the weightier of the two in terms of its situation in the letter, and information and research into it. The research into *koinōnia* in verse 16 is inevitably linked to the cognates that appear in the same passage (*koinōnos*, 10:18) and which expand the interpretation of *koinōnia* (see Campbell 1932:360). Others give special note to the reference in 10:16. For instance, Seesemann believes that it is of strategic importance in discovering Paul's use of the word (1933:102-3). Hauck, too, appears to see the reference as significant as he assigns a whole paragraph to it in his article (1964:805). It is a reference that has, according to McDermott, raised controversy in the attempt to reach an interpretation (1975:220). So our second point is that the reference in 10:16 appears to have significance in the overall scheme of Paul's use of the term *koinōnia*.

Thirdly, the claim can be made that 10:16 is the only occurrence in not only the Pauline material but in both Old and New Testaments, where *koinōnia* is linked with sacrifice and Christ. The other references to *koinōnia* refer to varied contexts which often

overlap as we have already seen, but none of them are used in the context of sacrifice. The importance of sacrifice as a concept in biblical literature is already a well-known fact and so we can conclude, with Hauck, that the connection of *koinōnia* with such a concept is significant (1964:805).

Finally, another fact which adds weight to the significance of 10:16 is that the reference is linked to the common meal which was the most frequent social activity of the first-century Graeco-Roman world. The fact that Paul uses *koinōnia* in that context poses the question why does he do so.

The connection between *koinōnia* and the Christian common meal has sparked debate on the meaning of the term. Hauck suggests that the participants in the Christian meal became companions of Christ at the meal, and that the participants have fellowship with Christ through the bread and wine (1964:805). Marshall contends that to think of *koinōnia* in terms only of fellowship, as Hauck appears to do, "confuses 'participation in' with 'sharing with'" - he suggests that the participants not only share in fellowship with Christ, but they share in the benefits that come from his death (1989:120). Barrett suggests that the primary intention of Paul is to declare that the participants share together in the benefits secured for them through Christ's death (1968:232). To what degree the Christian meal can be said to be a sacramental one has been the crux of the argument and the reason for controversy. McDermott suggests that Paul is using examples of Jewish meals to highlight the question of idolatry through pagan meals and not to draw comparisons of sacrementalism (1975:220-1).

So it appears that the question of the connection between *koinōnia* and the Christian meal has remained unresolved. This is our specific concern. The question we want to ask is does *koinōnia* include the idea of the Christian common meal, the eucharist, or is it there only by virtue of Paul in 1 Corinthians bringing the two ideas into conjunction with each other? Is Paul in fact giving a specific Christian sacramental sense to the word, or is he not? Why is he using *koinōnia* in that context? These are questions we want to address in this study.

6.0 The Way Forward

There is no consensus as we have already seen on the classification of *koinōnia*. The meaning assigned to the word by scholars varies in each context. It is precisely because of the different contexts in which *koinōnia* is found that the interpretations are diverse. This is an indication that the context is important in a study of this nature, and that the meaning of *koinōnia* cannot be determined without looking at the social context. As *koinōnia* is a Greek word the research on it has taken note of its use in Greek philosophical literature and daily life. The work of both Groenewald and Hauck are examples of such studies as is that of J Y Campbell (1932).

However, the social situation of the Pauline communities is an area of research that has come to the fore in New Testament studies in the last twenty years or so with the result that new insights on the communities have emerged. This has become evident, for instance, in an examination of the Graeco-Roman common meal with reference to the Pauline communities, and a much clearer picture has emerged of the format and importance of the common meal. What we want to do is examine the specific context of the Graeco-Roman common meal in which Paul uses *koinōnia*, including not only the social organisation of the meal, but its significance in the macro-society of Corinth. The fact that common meals were the primary social occasion in Graeco-Roman life we believe has an impact on Paul's use of *koinōnia*. Recent socio-historical studies of the first-century Mediterranean world has also yielded some valuable insights on urban social structures and the social networks that characterise them. We believe that it is important to understand the bearing of the social organisation of a city such as Corinth on the life of the Corinthian Christian community, especially when they met together to share a meal.

Those who have examined the social world of the early Christians include Edward Judge, Abraham Malherbe, John Gager, John Stambaugh, David Balch, Gerd Theissen and Wayne Meeks. Theissen (1982) in particular has focused work on Corinth, and Meeks (1983) presents the most comprehensive of the studies undertaken thus far.

Useful surveys and critiques of scholarship on social studies of the communities can be found in the works of Malherbe (1983) and Holmberg (1990).

Studies of the Pauline communities have tended to pivot around the social levels of the members of the communities. This is so as a result of the statements made by Adolf Deismann[3] (1965) concerning the stratification of the early Christian communities. Research on the social levels of the Pauline communities has reached a stage where, in the words of Malherbe, a "new consensus" is emerging (1983:31). Malherbe's statement came primarily as the result of the work of scholars such as Judge (1960a, 1960b) and Theissen. Their conclusion was that the communities were mixed in terms of social levels. Filson (1939) before them had reached similar conclusions. Meeks published his comprehensive work on the Pauline communities soon after Malherbe published the second edition of his book on early Christianity. Meeks, in essence, endorses Malherbe's suggestion (1983:73).

Despite the cautionary note delivered by amongst others, Gager (1979), Scroggs (1980) and Rohrbaugh (1984), concerning the research into the stratification of the Christian communities, it appears that Malherbe is right concerning the consensus on the social levels of the Pauline communities. Holmberg concludes from his investigation that Judge, Theissen and Meeks have shown clearly that

> ...the early Christian movement in Asia Minor, Greece and Italy in the middle of the first century was not exclusively a movement among the poorest strata of society (1990:69).

This accord concerning social levels is pertinent to our study as it impacts on our reason for concluding why Paul uses *koinōnia* as he does in the context of the meal. This point will become clearer as we proceed with the investigation.

Using a socio-historical approach, we will attempt a reconstruction of the Christian community in first-century Corinth, hereafter called the Corinthian community, in terms of stratification and social organisation. To do that we will first examine the

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[3] It is well known that Deissmann, in the early part of this century, established a new interest in the social situation of the first-century Christian communities by comparing the New Testament text with the then newly-discovered papyri. He found similarities between the language of the New Testament and popular Greek of that era, and from that comparison he situated members in the lower strata of society, that is, the poor, and leaders such as Paul in the lower-to-middle strata (see Deissmann 1965:144).

macro picture, that is, the Corinth of the first century, the Corinth in which the Pauline community was situated. This will include the social structures and organisational networks that emanated from Rome that were implemented in varying degrees of adaptation throughout the empire. The work of Judge, Meeks and Theissen are pertinent for such an examination. Other studies that focus on the social context, either generally or specifically, will also be consulted. These include, amongst others, studies by Stambaugh & Balch (1986), Garnsey & Saller (1987), Verner (1983), Wilken (1984), Murphy-O'Connor (1983).

The common meal as already stated was a significant occasion in Graeco-Roman society. The fact of groups of people eating meals together has for a long time been an object of study amongst anthropologists. More recently biblical scholars, such as Malina (1981) and Neyrey (1991), have shown special interest in this field with reference to the Christian communities, and using especially the work of Mary Douglas (1971, 1982). In choosing to examine in greater specificity the social context of the Corinthian community, a social history approach rather than one relying on anthropology has been chosen because we believe that a picture of the prevailing social systems in a city such as Corinth has a direct bearing on the way in which Paul uses *koinōnia*. Nevertheless, certain insights from anthropological research surrounding the Pauline communities will be drawn in when appropriate.

Some work has been carried out specifically on common meals with the purpose of throwing light on the Christian common meal. We will use in particular the work of Dennis Smith (1980, 1981) who examines the general format of common meals and looks at their social and moral significance in the Graeco-Roman world. Other studies that are relevant are ones dealing with the issue of eating food that has been sacrificed to idols. When Paul uses the term *koinōnia* in the context of the common meal, he does so against a background discussion on *eidōlothyta*, and this therefore should be considered in our investigation. Two scholars in particular have completed studies that offer some insights on this question, namely Gooch (1993), and Willis (1985). Both focus on an analysis of meals that involve religious rites and their social significance and both centre their discussion on Paul's argument in 1 Corinthians 8 and 10, albeit

with differing nuances and conclusions. Willis sets out to show that Graeco-Roman common meals were social meals without any sacramental significance, and Gooch suggests that the meals have both social and religious significance.

Therefore in terms of methodology we shall use a socio-historical approach to reconstruct the Corinthian community in its social setting in first-century Corinth and then combine it with an exegesis of 1 Corinthians 10:16. Such a combination will, we believe, elucidate why Paul uses the word *koinonia* and what he means by it in that context.

Therefore, chapter two will examine the social world of the Corinthian community, with particular emphasis on the common meal and the social networks and organisations that influenced meals then, so as to understand the social significance of the common meal in Corinthian society. A presentation of the Corinthian community as a social community set within its social context and the impact of that context on the community will form chapter three. Chapter four will examine the reference to *koinonia* in 1 Corinthians 10:16 not only in terms of Paul's theology, but also, in line with our socio-historical approach, in terms of the social context of the Corinthian community. In Chapter five we will bring the conclusions from our study.

In achieving our goal of finding out what Paul meant by *koinonia* and why he used it as he did in the context of the common meal, we shall achieve another objective, that is, to assemble together material both on Paul's context and on the text. This will be our contribution to the research already conducted on *koinonia*. To our knowledge there has not been a systematic study on *koinonia*, especially as Paul uses it in the context of the common meal, that connects social history with literary criticism.

CHAPTER TWO THE SOCIAL WORLD OF THE PAULINE COMMUNITY IN CORINTH

1.0 Introduction

This chapter will be devoted to an examination of the social world of the Christian community in Corinth. When referring to the social world, the first-century social world of the Christian community in Corinth, we are talking about that world on at least two levels. On one level there is the social organisation of the urban environment in which the community was situated. This considers not only a description of social groups that formed then, but also the physical environs in which those groups were found, that is, Corinth as a Roman colony at the time of Paul's visits.

On another level there is the world that forms the "substructure" of the urban environment, that is, the social system or network that underpinned the social groups in Corinth and which determined the customs and interactions of the residents of the city. Corinth was a city in a pre-industrial age and was subject to the codes and regulations that were characteristic of that age.

Paul makes a statement on *koinōnia* with reference to a social occasion, a common meal, to a group of Christians who live in a city. So that to arrive at some understanding of the nature of the Christian community in Corinth we need to look at Corinth as a city and as a society. It is common knowledge that the Pauline communities met together in people's houses. Often a description of those houses is not included in discussions on the Pauline communities because knowledge of first-century housing is assumed, often erroneously so, or the significance of the physical location of the community has been neglected. In this chapter we will include a description of the physical location of the meals, that is, the dining areas as well as the type of houses that the Christians would have likely used as meeting places.

However, the principal consideration of the chapter will be the Graeco-Roman common meal, including both a description of its practice and its significance in a city like

Corinth. Meal practices were regulated by levels of status in the city. The social networking system underpinning life in Corinth influenced all areas of its life and more so the most common social occasion, the common meal.

2.0 Reconstruction of Corinth as an Important Roman Colony

Corinth, in the middle of the first century, was a Roman colony that was barely a hundred years old. At the instigation of Julius Caesar the new Corinth had been built on the ruins of the old city, a magnificent and infamous Greek city which had been destroyed in 146 BCE during the disputes between the Achaean League and Rome. Archaeologists have been able to present an accurate picture of what Corinth was like in Paul's day, despite the earthquake in 77 CE that destroyed some of the then newly-reconstructed buildings.

Corinth was a large city, large by ancient standards, that is. Compared to a modern city, Corinth would be small, but Stambaugh and Balch state that in the first century it was in effect two-and-a-half times the size of Athens at that time (1986:157). It was strategically placed on the Isthmus that attached the Peloponnese to mainland Greece, and linked the Aegean Sea to the Gulf of Corinth. It therefore controlled trade in all directions, both from its two ports, Lechaeum and Cenchreae, and from the overland route passing through the city. Within the city walls the discovery of sites for shops, markets (meat, fish and produce), temples and shrines confirm its importance then as a commercial and religious centre. A long row of shops situated behind the *bema* was reputed to be the largest in the empire (Stambaugh & Balch 1986:158). Sources of wealth for Corinth included the trade that flowed through the ports and the *diolkos*, the paved road of the Isthmus, and also the Panhellenic festival or Isthmian games held bi-annually and the Caesarian games held every four years.

It seems that from 44BCE onwards the city was restored to much of its former splendour, albeit, as Furnish notes, with a distinct Roman overlay (1988:23). Although many of the previous structures from the old city were restored, several new ones were built to Roman design. Streets and pavements were constructed the Roman way - the

discovery of a prominent roadway leading up from the port of Lechaeum and called the Lechaeum Road attests to this. Even the platform, or *bema*, in the forum from which public provincial concerns were administered, was a replica of the one in Rome (Furnish 1988:20). Corinth was an administrative centre and numerous buildings attest to this, including at least three Roman basilicas, the largest of which was thought to house the judicial government of the colony, and two offices used by the president and judicial committee of the famous Isthmian Games.

One of the particular indicators of Roman influence in the city was an abundance of Latin inscriptions, such as the one to Babbius Philinus found on a fountain and monument in the city (see Murphy-O'Connor 1983:28-31, 36). Another inscription found on a pavement is the oft quoted one to Erastus who could have belonged to the Corinthian community (cf 2 Timothy 4:20). The numerous Latin inscriptions are also an indication of the Graeco-Roman social networking system in which people were honoured by means of inscription, and which we will discuss later in this chapter.

It is clear that, as was typical of cities then, Corinth functioned as a religious centre. Several religious temples and complexes have been found in the city. A large structure on the northern perimeter of the city, identified as the *Asklepieion*, comprising temple, bathing, dining and sleeping facilities, and dedicated to Asklepias, the god of healing, formed, according to Furnish, an important base for religious activities in Corinth (1988:22-25). Close by was the *Lerna*, with a set of dining rooms thought to have been used by visitors to the Asklepieion (see Gooch 1993:16-7).

Situated on the Acrocorinth overlooking Corinth, was the sanctuary of Demeter and Kore used as a cultic centre in the first century. Despite the fact that no dining-rooms connected to the sanctuary can be found dating to the first century, there is, according to Gooch, ample evidence to point to the sanctuary as a host for banquets during that time (1993:2-4). Before the destruction of Corinth in 146 BCE, the sanctuary of Demeter and Kore functioned as a prominent religious centre and archaeological evidence has revealed the sites of no less than forty dining-rooms adjacent to the sanctuary. It may be the case that as the dining areas were not restored in the first

century, eating took place outdoors or in tents erected on the site of the former dining areas (see Gooch 1993:3-4).

Several other cults were in evidence in Corinth. A temple to the wife of Augustus Caesar (Livia), and one to the Julian family, indicate that the imperial cult flourished there (see Stambaugh & Balch 1986:158, Chow 1992:148). Statues and inscriptions honouring deities of the Greek pantheon - especially Aphrodite,[4] Apollo and Poseidon - were found not only in temples dedicated to them, but also in squares and public buildings. Egyptian cults also flourished. A private chapel to Sarapis was discovered in what had once been a shop in the South Stoa towards the end of the first century CE (see White 1990:39). There would have been ample opportunity for Corinthians to engage in temple feasting.

Much of the remainder of the area within the city walls was given over to suburbs wherein lived the residents of Corinth, the original settlers having been brought in by Rome at the establishment of Corinth as a Roman city. It must be noted, however, that a large section of the space within Roman cities was given over to public buildings - in MacMullen's estimate approximately a quarter of the total area (1974:63).

It seems that the predominant influence in first-century Corinth was Roman. Signs of Roman influence were everywhere in its physical environs, from public buildings to open squares to paved roads. For the first century at least Latin was the official language.[5] Furnish reckons that

> Because Corinth was both a Roman colony and the capital of a senatorial province, its public life and even its appearance were significantly influenced by Rome. The official language in Corinth was Latin; the city was subject to Roman laws and its local government was like Rome (1988:20).

This would mean in effect that the management and social organisation of the city

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4 The popular claim that a thousand prostitutes served in the temple to Aphrodite is presently under dispute. Archaeological evidence for a large structure that would accommodate that number is lacking, and the suggestion is that written sources have been misunderstood (see Murphy-O'Connor 1983:125-8, Furnish 1988:25).

5 As is well known the official language reverted to Greek in the second century. Greek was the common language of the people and was therefore probably spoken in Corinth. It must be remembered that there was a fair amount of syncretism so that many of the Greek and Roman customs would have appeared similar.

would follow closely the Roman pattern. It seems that the government of the city was organised around a three-part system of citizen assembly, city council and magistrates, a system which according to Murphy-O'Connor continued in Corinth until Byzantine times (1983:7). The fact that Corinth was an important administrative capital and attracted peoples from all over the empire for the games and festivals, would in itself be a reason for maintaining Roman structures of social organisation.

3.0 Social Organisation and Stratification in Roman Colonies

A dependence on Rome in social organisation could be seen in two areas in particular, that is, the sharp division of the population along social lines and the patron-client interactions amongst people through which Rome supervised her empire. A reference by Strabo to the resettling of Corinth states that Caesar "colonised it with people who for the most part belonged to the freedmen class" (Geography 23c, cited in Murphy-O'Connor 1983:50). Rome at that time had slaves from all over its empire, and so it is likely that there was a mixture of cultures, such as Egyptian, Syrian, Greek and Jew[6] who were sent to populate Corinth (Furnish 1988:16). Murphy-O'Connor suggests that possibly some of the original population returned after the destruction of the city in 146 BCE and lived in amongst the ruins (Murphy-O'Connor 1983:46). It is possible too, that as the new city grew and prospered, other peoples from surrounding countries might have settled in Corinth. According to Murphy-O'Connor, no in-depth research has been carried out on the size of Corinth's population in the first century (see further Murphy-O'Connor 1983:31-2, 67). MacMullen, however, reckons that the average population in Roman cities may have been about two hundred per acre, which suggests a measure of overcrowding (1974:63). As we have already noted, a great deal of space within cities was given over to public buildings.

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6 Archaeological evidence is inconclusive for a strong Jewish presence in Corinth at that time. The only marble fragments found of a synagogue date to the fourth or fifth century CE (Furnish 1988:26). This does not indicate, however, an absence of synagogues in first-century Corinth. Literary evidence points to the fact that Paul visited a synagogue in Corinth (Acts 18:4). White suggests that archaeological evidence at Dura could indicate that the development of the synagogue from private house to public building could have "parallelled (rather than preceded)" the development of Christian housechurch to public building (1990:8). The synagogue visited by Paul in Corinth was probably, therefore, in a house.

Manumission, which could be given or bought, was the most common way for slaves to become freedpersons. It was customary for Rome to populate new colonies with Roman citizens and so the freedpersons who went to Corinth and who were not already citizens, would have probably acquired citizenship as part of the deal (see Stambaugh & Balch 1986:19). Stambaugh & Balch tell us that both freedpersons and slaves formed the backbone of a city's commercial development (1986:117-18). According to Meeks the freedpersons and slaves of Caesar's household were virtually the civil service of the empire, in the provinces no less than in Rome (1983:21).

3.1 Social Stratification

Roman society was sharply divided as we have stated along social lines and there were two distinct categories: the lower classes,[7] the *humiliores*[8] and the upper classes, the *honestiores* (see Verner 1983:47). Freedpersons and slaves belonged to the lower classes, together with non-citizens, in some instances freeborn citizens, and beggars, labourers and the general poor. According to Gager, slavery was endemic then and "reached its highest proportion" in the first century, both BCE and CE (1971:109). Sources of slavery included war, the slave trade, criminal convictions, and voluntary slavery because of poverty. Slaves had no legal status and no rights, and were the property of their owners, who could treat their slaves as they wanted with minimal legal restrictions. However, the fact that some were skilled and professional people meant that they were often entrusted with managerial and educational or professional responsibilities, and could accrue some wealth for themselves (Stambaugh & Balch 1986:113). Alfoldy suggests, though, that such opportunities might have been rare (1985:112). Even after gaining their freedom through manumission, slaves and their children were subjected to lifelong obligation to their owners (see Verner 1983:62).

For women, however, slavery often meant prostitution as well, such as in the case of

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7 However, we should not give a modern interpretation to the word class as an indication of status, as this would not reflect accurately Roman - and for that matter also Greek - society. Garnsey & Saller point out that "status was based on the social estimation of his [a Roman] honour, the perception of those around him as to his prestige" (1987:118).

8 These terms were used in a legal sense as a description of social levels and can be substantiated by sources dating at least to the middle of the second century CE (see further Alfoldy 1985:106).

the flute girl at common meal occasions. Slaves were expected to be sexually available to those who owned or hired them, including not only women but young boys too. Often the only way out of slavery for a women was through prostitution or by becoming the official concubine of her former owner (see Corley 1993:49-51).

Those who made up the upper class were regarded as belonging to an established *ordo*: the senators, equestrians or free-born citizens, and decurions, or the local aristocracy (Alfoldy 1985:106). The emperor and his family headed the upper class, immediately above the senators, who represented a small percentage of the population and by the first century had begun to decline as an order. The most important jobs in the empire went to senators, such as military commanders, provincial governors and ceremonial priests (Stambaugh & Balch 1986:111).

The average equestrian followed a formal career design. They started in the army, moved to some procuratorial financial positions, took on the responsibility for the food distribution and the imperial fleets, and reached the highest post open to them: the Praetorian Guard and prefectures of Egypt. Later, as the aristocracy dwindled, senators were chosen from the ranks of the equestrians. There would probably have been several posts for equestrians in Corinth as military personnel, civil administrators and landowners.

The decurions were drawn from the local aristocracy who were allowed by Rome to rule in their locality and were expected to be loyal to Rome. They were free-born citizens, men who "were expected to possess respectable birth, wealth and moral worth" (Garnsey & Saller 1987:114). They served on local councils, taking responsibility for the organization of civic and commercial interests in their city, and were expected to invest considerable time and money in the execution of their duties. They were usually rewarded for their services by means of honourable titles and appointments, sometimes to the equestrian order (see further Verner 1983:51-2, Garnsey & Saller 1987:114-5).

The upper classes, especially the senatorial order were diligent in protecting their position and privileges, and were often disdainful of the lower classes. Customs and in some instances, legislation, existed as a protection for the upper classes (see Garnsey & Saller 1987:112). Stambaugh and Balch sum up the prevailing attitude thus:

> Legal barriers emphasized the gulf between the orders. These were informal but real: Members of the senatorial aristocracy were forbidden to marry former slaves, separate courts tried the upper classes and the lower classes, and separate punishments were decreed....Even at meals, whether private dinner parties to which a rich patron invited some of his clients or public banquets given by an aristocrat for his fellow citizens, your place and even what you got to eat depended strictly on your status; the invitation to "come up higher" would never be extended to one of inappropriate status, although some Roman authors thought that everyone at a dinner should eat the same food and be accessible to each other (1986:114).

Instances show that these barriers were penetrable, and that there was some movement up the scale. The freedman, Pallas, was an example of such movement. As financial secretary to Claudius, Pallas was honoured by the senate in ways above his status and more in keeping with the upper classes. It was quite common, it seems, for senators to delegate to their subordinates their administrative duties because they did not have the necessary skills themselves, a factor which contributed to the later decrease in numbers of the order (see Meeks 1983;22, also Gager 1971:101).

Babbius Philinus, as mentioned above, was an *aedilis* in Corinth, and is perhaps a typical example of a freedman who moved to a position of responsibility and a measure of status in Corinth. According to Murphy-O'Connor, the monument to his name would have been self-funded; both the monument and the fountain (to Poseidon) are probably indications of the honour given to him as patron (see Murphy-O'Connor 1983:27-8).

Even though there are indications of barriers being crossed, Meeks suggests that upward mobility may in fact have been minimal (1983:20). All movement was in any event controlled by the prevailing social networking system, the system of patron-client relations. Malina and Neyrey point out that for most people access to wealth was not easy, a consequence of living in what has been termed a society of limited goods

easy, a consequence of living in what has been termed a society of limited goods (1991:229). In other words, there was a limit on the availability and quantity of necessary merchandise, both material and non-material (see Esler 1994:34-5). Graeco-Roman society was so-called pre-industrial or agrarian, in which the ownership of property, land and desired goods was in the hands of the few, the upper class, and the rest of the population were either in competition for a little of the resources, or enslaved or obligated to those who had the resources.

It is impossible to consider the social organisation of the city without considering the household as it was through the household that the system of social networks became most evident. The household also functioned as the primary setting for common meals in the empire.

3.2 The Household as the Base for Social Networks

Historically the household was a major institution through which the economy of a city such as Corinth was channelled. The household, in the words of Stambaugh and Balch, was regarded as "the basic building block of the state" (1986:123). Government in the general sense in the Graeco-Roman context was first learned through the household. This idea that politics emanated from the household formed the basic one in Aristotle's works (*Pol* vol 1). In Philo we read of a correlation between household management, *oikonomia*, and state management, *politeia* (*Ebr* 92, *SpecLeg* 3.170).

The household continued to function as the primary social unit during the first century throughout the Roman empire. Garnsey and Saller sum up the role of the household thus:

> [T]he family was the basic social unit through which wealth and status were transmitted. As such, the perpetuation of the aristocracy, the possibilities for social mobility, the distribution of landed wealth, and other matters depended fundamentally on patterns of family behaviour (Garnsey & Saller 1987:126).

Starting with the emperor, whose household represented the prime institution in the empire, the household was replicated many times over in the Graeco-Roman world.

equestrians were the ones sent out to the provinces to govern as Caesar would. According to Stambaugh and Balch, Rome had two major interests in the provinces: order and taxation (1987:174).

It is clear that the household provided the primary needs of its members, serving as a major resource for the communities tied into it. Voluntary associations, which we will consider later in this chapter, relied chiefly on the household structure for their continued existence. Through the household unit these groups were joined to the network of relational ties or patron-client relations. In addition to this, the household was an important religious unit, and Verner tells us:

> Everyone who became a part of it passed into the service and under the protection of its gods (1983:28).

The *paterfamilias* was the head of the household and his authority was usually unquestioned. He acted as father and husband, but also as priest and patron to the household.

The term household as used in the first-century Mediterranean world should not be confused with modern definitions of households that focus only on the nuclear family. During the empire the term *domus*[9] (household) was commonly used as a designation for family, and was defined not so much by familial bonds, or kinship, as "by the relationship of dependence and subordination" (Meeks 1983:30). It was a unit comprising more than the nuclear family. Included in the domus were the husband, wife and children, but also slaves, possibly tenants, clients, freedmen and usually those with kinship ties to the paterfamilias or his wife (Garnsey & Saller 1987:128). A paterfamilias would have to have the material means to support an extended family. We will see later when we look at housing in Corinth that the average living space of a modest house or apartment would not allow for an extended household. It is unlikely,

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9 The term *familia* was also used, but in reference to descent groups this term is limited because "a daughter's children or a mother's blood kin are excluded" - thus, so as to include a woman's kinship groups, the term *domus* was preferred during the empire with reference to descent groups within the Roman aristocracy, and indeed to the household in general (see Garnsey & Saller 1987:128-29). The word domus was used also to refer to the physical building, that is, the mansion or villa of the wealthy. The word *insulae* was used with reference to houses of those with more modest means (see Verner 1983:57).

too, that the average income of people in the lower strata could afford servants and slaves.[10]

Household codes provide an idea of the power of the head acting as patron. Just as there were sharp divisions between classes, so too there were sharp differences regarding gender roles in Graeco-Roman society. Corley notes that there was a dichotomy between the "public" and "private" spheres in terms of gender (1993:15). The public sphere was in effect the forums, the lawcourts, the theatres, lectures and public banquets, and to these men had free access. Women, on the other hand, were confined to the private sphere of the household which they were expected to manage. If they moved into the public sphere, they had to be escorted and had to wear a veil. Women who had more reason to be in the public sphere were those of lower classes, who could be termed prostitutes for venturing into a male domain (see further Corley 1993:15-17). The traditional role of women was one of serving, as was so also for children and slaves. The traditional role of men was by contrast one of rulership (see Meeks 1986:112).

Roman law then required women to be under permanent male guardianship. Wives were subject to their husbands in social matters but in legal matters came under the protection of fathers, or in their absence an appointed guardian. Women could own property in their own right but the selling of property, and indeed any formal transaction, required the permission of father or guardian. Women could inherit their father's estate and despite laws to curb this, Roman women in the first century are reported to have had wealth which they used to participate in public benefactions, hold public office and generally function as patrons (see Garnsey & Saller 1987:130, Verner 1983:39, Corley 1993:11-12).

There was a wide age gap between husband and wife - a late male/ early female pattern of marriage persisted then. Higher education - philosophy, rhetoric, law - was open to aristocratic women, but not to the same level as for men (see Garnsey & Saller

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10 Verner notes that slaves went at between 500 and 2000 sesterces; a Roman soldier "would have to spend nearly one third of a year's salary to buy even the cheapest slave" (Verner 1983:61).

1987:130-36). Generally, aristocratic women were regarded as respectable and were expected to conduct themselves so. In practice this meant that the role of the woman as matron (married woman) was centred on the household, in providing the necessary support to her husband the patron, a support which included the organisation of common meals.

Women in traditional Greek society were not welcome at meals unless it was a gathering of their relatives or they were involved in the entertainment, and in that case would be regarded as prostitutes (see Corley 1993:26). Respectable Greek women therefore ate separately in their own quarters. Roman women, however, were permitted to join their husbands at meals and, although in some instances reclined next to their husbands, women generally sat beside their husband's couch. Weddings were an exception and at wedding feasts women could recline together on their own couch (see Smith 1980:210). According to Balsdon, women did not remain for the so-called symposium part of the meal occasion (1962:271-72, cf page 35 below).

Respectable single women were usually not permitted at banquets other than weddings and the rare occasion that they attended such feasts were required to sit at their father's feet, the proper place for all children (see Corley 1993:29-30). Women were increasingly being allowed more freedoms within meal practice, but, according to Corley, it is not certain how widespread were the changes in meal practice as far as it concerned the household institution (1993:30).

So there is some evidence that women assumed the role of patron and became a "materfamilias". This would probably include benefactions and servicing of clients, as was normal for patrons.

We can surmise from the caricature that Petronius in his *Satyricon* presents of the *nouveau riche*, those with wealth but no class, that this group imitated the lifestyle of the aristocrats. The women would behave in the same way as their aristocratic counterparts and the men would take roles as patrons of households, and "service" their

clients through patronage of all sorts. We turn now to inspect the primary workings of the system of patron-client connections.

3.3 Patron-client Connections: A System of Social Relations

The system of patron-client relations as a social system is still found today in some societies, thus making it possible for social scientists[11] to examine it as a model today. In the first-century world, the patron-client system operated through households. It was a hierarchically structured system of relationships, starting with emperor[12] and copied on a smaller scale all over the empire. Several elements can be identified: patron-client relations involves an exchange of different resources, which are given specifically to clients; the tie is unequal in terms of status, is entered into voluntarily and is binding, sometimes for life (see Eisenstadt & Roniger 1984:48-9).

Halvor Moxnes defines patron-client relations thus:

> Patron-client relations are social relationships between individuals based on a strong element of inequality and difference in power. The basic structure of the relationship is an exchange of different and very unequal resources. A patron has social, economic, and political resources that are needed by a client. In return, a client can give expressions of loyalty and honour that are useful for the patron (Moxnes 1991:242).

Given the social structure of Graeco-Roman societies, it was the upper classes who had the monopoly on social, economic and political resources and it was expected of them to uphold the structures by giving of their resources in exchange for (usually) honour. The primary element in patron-client relationships in Roman society was reciprocity. What was offered - whether it was protection, financial loans, food or job opportunities - had an expectation of some sort of return attached to it. The concepts of honour and

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11 S Eisenstadt and L Roniger (1984) have done some extensive work in this area. L Roniger also researched patron-client relations in Republican Rome and the early empire: Roniger, L 1983. Modern Patron-Client Relations and Historical Clientalism: Some Clues from Ancient Republican Rome. *AES 24*, 63-95.

12 In the relationship between Rome and the provinces, the provincial ruler operated as a mediator or "broker" between the patron (emperor) and client (province), thereby giving the client access to resources "of a more powerful patron" (Moxnes 1991:248). Some patrons were benefactors to entire cities or communities, using their resources for the benefit of the community in exchange for public honour and allegiance (see Moxnes 1991:249).

shame, which will be considered shortly, were an important part of the reciprocal arrangement and those who provided economic resources were rewarded by being honoured. From their clients patrons expected, for example, loyalty, hard work and public acknowledgements of some kind, in return for what they offered the clients: protection from hostility, farming land for tenants, financial loans, job opportunities, food or education. There was strong competition - amongst decurions and equestrians especially - for the position of benefactor. Once in office, however, benefactions had to be maintained, under pressure from below:

> There were strong expectations as to how a patron ought to behave (Moxnes 1991:249).

There was little room for "charity". Stambaugh and Balch point out that in fact

> Charity for the poor and destitute, who could not offer anything in exchange, was virtually unknown. Even when we do hear of donations of food or money, the largest portions always go to the more prosperous members of the recipient population, those who can make the most impressive return. If the most needy do receive something, it seems to be coincidental to the main purpose of the donation (1986:64).

The focus, it appears, was on giving and receiving only amongst those with something to offer in exchange, those who were regarded as "friends". Friendship in Graeco-Roman society included both equal and unequal ties. So that friends could join in meals together, as we shall see below, as equal companions, but in terms of the social networks a friend would be one who entered into a social contract (see Garnsey & Saller 1987:11, also Marshall 1987:1-4[13]). Thus many of the interactions of so-called "friends" were more on a level of patron-client relationships. The elites would gather about them "friends"[14] with whom there would be an exchange of personal resources (Moxnes 1988:245). "Friends" would be expected to offer financial aid in times of crisis, would be relied on to oversee distant properties, would be expected to be included generously in wills as an exchange for favours. However, behind "...the

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[13] Marshall examines the connection between friendship and enmity in Graeco-Roman social life - for a comprehensive discussion on friendship see pages 1-34.

[14] Thus Pilate was accused of not being a "friend" to Caesar (John 19:12). Dio Chrysostom records the importance of "friends" to aid in the affairs of royalty:"....our greatest necessities....without friends to control them are..... exceedingly precarious...."(*Oratio* 3:94). A person of royalty has within his means the ability to surround himself with "friends" (*Oratio* 3:131-32).

facade of cooperation lay competition" - those who could not reciprocate in equal fashion were relegated to a lower level of friendship, becoming "lesser friends", and "losing honour in the process" (see Garnsey & Saller 1987:155-6).

One of the signs of a successful patron was his ability to bestow favours and generate a following. This ability was

> ...reflected in the size of his following - a large clientele symbolizing his power to give inferiors what they needed (Saller 1982:205).

The more a patron provided for his clients what was needed, which included opportunities to participate in meals, the more chance he had to gather additional clients. In like manner, the patron who proved himself able to look after clients, was in turn also dependent on his patrons in terms of social mobility. Some patrons welcomed even unknown or uninvited guests to their table to swell their entourage of clients. For these guests, often referred to as "parasites", it was the prime means to move up the social ladder and sometimes even to eat a meal. To refuse an invitation to a meal was regarded as an affront (see further Gooch 1993:41-3).

It has been suggested by Malina that the expectations of patronal behaviour and indeed behaviour on all levels, were controlled by the values, honour and shame, which he believes were "pivotal" values in the first-century world (1981:25-27, see also Moxnes 1988:207-8). Honour in the Graeco-Roman world had to do with the status of an individual in the eyes of a relevant social group (Esler 1994:25, Moxnes 1988:208). The personality-type of the first-century, described as a *dyadic* personality, was rooted in community. In other words, people did not perceive themselves as individuals, but as members of the community. This meant that they were dependent on the ascriptions of significant others in their community to validate their significance or self-worth (Malina & Neyrey 1991:32, Esler 1994:29). A dyadic person was also reliant on others to " situate persons, things and events within a proper context" (Malina & Neyrey 1991:34). Material wealth, for instance, was regarded only as a means of acquiring honour, and the wealth itself was not regarded as honourable.

Honour, like all goods in that world, was a limited commodity. There were only two paths to honour: it could be either ascribed, by birth or inheritance, or it could be acquired, through the system of benefaction as mentioned above. Social contacts outside of the family were seen as opportunities for honour concessions or contests between equals. Social acceptance and the reputation of a person or group depended on what honour could be acquired by them. Moxnes identifies what could be considered to be the main characteristics of a society governed by honour and shame:

> In the Graeco-Roman world the group was more important than the individual. The individual received status from the group. Therefore, recognition and approval from others were important. Interaction between people was characterized by the competition for recognition and the defence of one's own status and honour. To refuse a person's claim for honour was to put the person to shame. The basic notion of all studies of honour and shame is that they represent the value of a person in her or his own eyes but also in the eyes of his or her society (1988:208).

In the Graeco-Roman world, and no less in Corinth, honour and shame were values that were intrinsic to the patron-client networks that operated through households. All social interactions became opportunities to augment an individual's honour rating, sometimes at another's expense. This would mean that the common meal, as the most frequent social activity, could be an opportunity in which persons could acquire or be affirmed of honour, or in which persons could be shamed.

4.0 The Graeco-Roman Common Meal

During the Graeco-Roman era, the Greek common meal - the *deipnon*/ *symposium* - was influenced by Roman meal practices and ultimately both Greek and Roman meals became similar to each other. Generally, three meals were eaten daily, the first two consisting of light fare such as bread, fruit, cheese or eggs, the more substantial food being reserved to the last main meal of the day, the *deipnon*. This meal was the focal point of the day and, indeed, of the social lives of the Greeks and Romans. It could take place in the privacy of home as a family affair or as an occasion for meeting together with friends and associates at home or in dining-rooms specially constructed for these occasions.

4.1 Physical Location of the Meals

The dining-rooms could be in a private location, such as someone's house or in a clubhouse that was especially built for meal gatherings. A typical example of dining areas in public buildings is the *Asklepieion* and *Lerna* at Corinth, already mentioned above, and dating from the fourth century BCE to the Graeco-Roman era. A ground-plan of the temple precincts pinpoints three dining rooms situated between the temple terrace and the fountain of *Lerna* (see Smith 1980:227-230). The dining rooms in Smith's estimation were very much part of the temple composition,[15] an estimation that is contrary to the American School of Classical Studies (see Gooch 1993:17). Gooch reckons that excavations from other Asklepieia point to a clear connection between temple and dining facilities and therefore the same probably applied at Corinth (1993:17-21). The following description given by Smith of the square-shaped dining rooms, all identical and each having eleven couches, is based on archaeological discoveries at Corinth, and gives a fair indication of the nature of a dining room at that time:

> Several of the couches have survived. They are each constructed out of a single stone slab with the couch legs and a raised headrest carved out of stone. Their surfaces are slightly concave so as to hold cushions on them. The couches are all ca. 1.86 m. long and average 0.80 m. in width. They rest on low sills or platforms of plaster which were placed along the edge of the walls to serve as the foundation surface for the couches....The location of the tables is indicated by rectangular holes that were cut in the cement floor in front of the couches. These holes are thought to have held stone supports on which wooden table tops would have rested. The square stone block in the center of each room is thought to have served as the surface for a brazier of some kind on which food could have been warmed or cooked. This identification is based on the fact that these stones were found to be cracked and blackened by heat, but were not built so that they could easily contain fire directly on top of the stones (1980:229-230).

In this particular case, the couches were built for single occupancy, but in other

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[15] Smith notes the work done by Bergquist (1967) on sanctuaries in the Graeco-Roman period and particularly her conclusion that the banqueting areas of the Greek sanctuaries were "accepted together with the essential elements and the ritual activities in the one, large, undifferentiated area of the temenos" and that this also applied to non-Greek structures, that is, "particularly sanctuaries of Roman religion and of the Oriental cults" (Smith 1980:86).

instances two and sometimes even three reclined on the same couch. The private house setting for meals would not be as large as the public one but would nevertheless have rooms set aside for entertaining, one of them being a dining room.

Excavations on housing in Corinth have yielded a first-century Roman villa at Anaploga, one of the residential areas of Corinth. The villa is apparently typical of a dwelling constructed for the elite of Corinth, the so-called upper classes as described above. The villa has several rooms, mainly for private family use. There are two public rooms in which guests would be entertained, the *triclinium* (dining room), containing nine reclining couches, and the *atrium*, a courtyard adjoining the triclinium with a pool in the centre (Murphy-O'Connor 1983:155). According to Smith it was usual to have nine reclining couches in houses of the elite (1980:28).

Murphy-O'Connor points out that excavations of three other villas, one in Pompeii (first century CE), one near the Sicyonian Gate in Corinth (second century CE), and the third at Olynthus (fourth century BCE), reveal similar dimensions in the size of the triclinium and atrium. Taking the floor areas of the four villas together, the average size of the triclinium is 36 square metres, and of the atrium, 55 square metres (Murphy-O'Connor 1983:155-6).

The villa at Anaploga is a typical upper-class Roman villa, with sufficient space to house a good number of people. Murphy-O'Connor estimates that, taking into account the couches in the triclinium and possible ornaments in the atrium, the triclinium would hold nine people and the atrium about forty (1983:156).

The suburbs in Corinth have not been fully excavated and so evidence for other types of housing comes mainly from excavations at Ostia[16] in the second century, where also private mansions similar to the one at Anaploga were discovered (see Verner 1983:57). Housing of those not considered elite consisted typically of "multi-storied apartment

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16 Here we will use the research of Packer (1967) as found in David Verner's study on households (Verner 1983:54-63).

houses", or *insulae*,[17] which incorporated a row of shops on the ground floor, each probably with a room or mezzanine at the back for the accommodation of the owner and his family.

Some insulae housed factories containing mezzanine accommodation for workers. Two types of "apartment" are evident: one or two-roomed apartments on the upper floors, and "luxury" apartments with several rooms on either the upper or the ground floors. Very few of the apartments (even the "luxury" ones) apparently had sanitation and kitchen facilities, which means that eating and socialising for the inhabitants would have taken place in public facilities or the houses of other people (see further Verner 1983:57-8).

Similar insulae, dating to the first century CE, have been found in Ephesus, with evidence of water being transported in clay pipes to the larger, or "luxury" apartments (Verner 1983:59). From the evidence at Ostia, and at Ephesus, it appears that most people in the lower strata of society lived in one or two-roomed apartments without water or ablution facilities laid on, and without space for "household servants" (Verner 1983:60). Verner quotes J E Packer on the spread of the population in the housing in Ostia. Packer's statistics indicate that 2.5% of the population of Ostia in the second century CE lived in private mansions, 5% in "luxury" apartments, 74% in one and two-roomed apartments, and that 18.5% were homeless (see Verner 1983:58). It is possible that this picture pertained in Corinth, too.

White suggests that widespread evidence indicates the use of private houses for the gatherings of the innumerable "new or imported religious and ethnic associations" that were an urban phenomena in the Greek east (1990:39). White cites evidence in Rome where the owner of a house renovated a room in the house especially so that a group that called themselves the Association of Treebearers could meet and dine together (see

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[17] Packer discovered that the design of the insulae described here was a common one in Pompeii and Herculaneum in the first century CE, and in use in Rome in the late third century BCE and therefore suggests that it was an "indigenous development" in Rome and was later transported to Roman cities in the colonies (see Verner 1983:58-9). See also McKay (1975: 213), for a suggestion that the design came originally from the Greek East and was brought from there to Rome.

White 1990:45-7). Excavations at Ostia have yielded evidence of the meeting places of diverse trade associations which appear to have either been a type of dining hall or covered courtyard. The sites are next to the forum in some instances or next to temple complexes in other instances (see Smith 1980:129-30). One of the meeting places discovered at Ostia, that of the Association of Carpenters, is apparently an apartment house (insula) that had been renovated especially for the needs of the association, and housed four triclinia with couches large enough to accommodate three people. In this particular renovated apartment most of the available space was given over to dining facilities, an indication of the importance of the communal meal (see Smith 1980:130-34).

What is clear is that the vast majority of people in the provinces would be classed in the lower bracket of society and would not have the resources to provide common meal gatherings in private houses. Yet the common meal featured prominently on social calendars in the Graeco-Roman world. The clue to how this was made possible is the system of patron-client relationships that will be discussed later. Many of the associations met in houses provided or especially built for them by patrons. It seems that the location of meals was dependent on patrons, although, says Smith "many locations would appear to correspond to the predominant aim or identity of the club" (1980:136).

The Christian community in Corinth would have met probably in a house similar to the one at Anaploga or possibly an apartment adapted for entertaining such as the one in Ostia. There was a basic meal format in widespread use and the contexts in which the meals occurred were many and varied.

4.2 The Format of the Meal

There were two parts to the common meal, the eating part or *deipnon*, and the drinking and entertainment part, called the *symposium*. The *deipnon* commenced usually before sundown and ended after dark, lasting normally two and a half to four hours. On particular festivals, such as those dedicated to local deities, guests were invited well in

advance, but often uninvited guests who turned up were allowed in, depending on the type of function being held.

On arrival, the guests were escorted to the dining room by a servant and their feet washed by other servants. They were then allocated places on couches by the host of the function, starting from the most honoured - called the *protos* - immediately to the right of the host, and continuing right, to the last, least important place. Water was then made available for them to wash their hands, because eating utensils were not used.

The first of two courses was placed by the servants on the tables in front of the couches and might consist of bread - a staple at all meals - and vegetables such as onions, beans, leeks, olives, herbs, with fish and meat available on particularly special occasions. Bread was also used for wiping hands and was then thrown, together with scraps, to the floor for the dogs to eat. At the end of the first course, the tables were removed and the floor swept. Then once again water was made available for the washing of hands.

A wine ceremony followed which consisted of wine (unmixed) being poured into a cup by the host, the name of the deity was enunciated over it twice, some of the wine was thrown out into the fire or on the floor, and then starting with the host, a sip was taken and the name of the deity proclaimed each time as the cup was passed round. Following that a hymn or "paean" would be sung, probably in honour of the deity. Fruit and nuts and salt - to increase the thirst - would be served and bowls of wine distributed (see further Smith 1980:15).

The clearing of tables and the wine ritual marked the end of the first part of the meal, the *deipnon*, and the beginning of the second, the symposium.[18] During this latter dessert-cum-wine-drinking part the entertainment took place.

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[18] Smith points out that the fact that the latter is separated from the first have led some to believe that they were separate events altogether, but argues that, considering the rationale of the occasion, "it is difficult to imagine a *symposium* without a *deipnon* at all" (1980:18). Though it appears that some guests came for the symposium only, the general pattern was for them to attend both.

Symposia took various forms depending on the identity of the group. It was usual to appoint a supervisor or *symposiarch* to organize wine-mixing and the entertainment procedures. Wine was mixed with water on a ratio two to five or one to three. Portions to be distributed were decided as well as the toasting practice for the occasion - for example, it was a custom to toast one's neighbour. The entertainment or activity varied, once again according to the identity of the group, and included games, philosophical discussions, dramatic diversions and musical and theatrical entertainment.[19]

4.3 Symposium Traditions

Symposia were the ideal forum for philosophical discussion. Philosophy then was more concerned with popular morality and ethics, and literature from that time reflects the importance of the common meals. The banquet theme occurs frequently and is used as a means of satirising society. As a result of an emphasis on drinking and entertainment, symposia gained a reputation for decadence and dissipation, but according to Smith, the depictions of symposia by satirists and artists should not be regarded as the norm then (1980:22). This point finds support in Plutarch descriptions of symposia which relied on Plato's and Xenophon's ideas in their *Symposia* (see, for instance, Plutarch *QConv 1.1* 612D).

A significant theme of the philosophers such as Plato was the ideal of sharing all things in common. Common sharing especially amongst friends and marriage partners was summed up by the word *koinōnia* (Plat *Resp* 5 466C; see also Arist *EthNic* 8, 2 1159B). The well-known expression "friends have all things in common" (*koina [garta] ton philon*) extended not only to friends but to societies and cities too (*Phaedr* 279c). Plato spoke out of a whole history in Greek thought concerning common sharing. The original Greek ideal for society was centred on common ownership, an ideal which was eroded by the rise of private enterprise in classical Greece. Such

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[19] Central to the entertainment was the flute girl *"he auletris"*, who seemed to be "the most consistent feature of entertainment at a symposium, being pictured in virtually every pictorial representation of a symposium and mentioned in nearly every description", and though "often held in low esteem....flute girls were essential fixtures at any Greek sacrificial ceremony and thus played an essential role in Greek religion" (Smith 1980:20-21).

economic development strengthened the Greek city states in which social distinctions within the population became more pronounced, and ownership of property became a social issue to be addressed by both politician and poet (see for example Hom *Il* 6,243 ff, *Od* 412 ff; Plat *Leg* 5 739D, 8 841B, 11 923A).

This political crisis produced a search for new groups in society in an attempt to recapture the common ideals of friendship and sharing, or *koinōnia* (see Best & Gassmann 1994:41). This could account for the proliferation of small groups, or voluntary associations, that sprang up and were continuing to do so at the time of Paul's visit to Corinth. The two basic Graeco-Roman institutions, the state (*polis*) and the household (*oikonomia*), failed to meet fully the need of people for common sharing (see Judge 1960a:40). Both Plato's and Xenophon's ideas on symposia were taken to represent the ideal, and they show particularly a marked sobriety, serious discussion and an absence of decadence and immorality in meal gatherings. Their literature was popular during the Hellenistic period, and should therefore be taken as not only descriptions of the ideal, but prescriptions for symposia. It is possible that in practice their ideas worked as a halfway measure between satire and ideal.

The word *koinōnia* was a common word in Graeco-Roman society, used widely to describe all sorts of relationships, such as legal partnerships, business agreements, marriage partnerships, relationships generally between people, but also between people and deities (see Hauck 1964:798-80). It was used in a broad sense to describe a sharing in something with others, but also carried a sense of equality and friendship, a fact that could be seen particularly in the symposium tradition. The idea of friendship around a meal is the basis of the use of the term *koinōnia* in both the Classical and Hellenistic eras. It was commonly thought that the gods were present at feasts to which people had been invited as table companions (see Hauck 1964:799). Plutarch's understanding of an ideal symposium is reflected in these words:

> A dinner party is a sharing (*koinōnia*) of earnest and jest, of word and deed; so the diners must not be left to chance, but must be such as are friends and intimates of one another who will enjoy being together (QConv 7.6).

A meal was not a meal unless common sharing or *koinōnia* was present, which meant

a sharing in friendship and equality and sociability around a meal. A common saying at the time, used by Plutarch, highlights this fact: "I have eaten but not dined today", the implication being that the meal was more than partaking of food - its essence was the sharing, or *koinonia*, amongst the guests (Plu *QConv* 697C). Plutarch describes a dinner party where the guests brought their own meals and ate separately, and a feast where guests were given individual portions of the meal which they then ate in private (*QConv* II, 10, 1). In both these instances, Plutarch describes a resultant lack of the ideals of table fellowship which he describes as *koinonia*.

Evidence for the question of equality at meals can be found in one of Pliny's letters, where he advises a friend on table etiquette, especially on whether the food served to guests should be differentiated along class lines, which was customary in some quarters. Pliny states that he does not approve of distinguishing between guests as he had invited them "as equals to the same table" and he therefore gave them the same fare. He gave them all food that pertained to the status of the lower classes rather then the higher classes and in that way saved on costs (*Ep* 2.6). The fact that equality was a topic of conversation at symposia suggests that it was an issue at that time. The measure described by Pliny suggests that many were prepared to endorse the ideal of all things in common, but in reality paid only lip service to it.

The point of the conversation in Pliny's letter is that the ideals of equality and common sharing around a meal should be upheld. Another way in which *koinonia* at meals could be demonstrated was in the places offered to guests. We have already stated in our descriptions of the meal setting that provision was made for guests to be seated according to status. This practice was discussed by Plutarch in his account of symposiums, with the question being asked: should guests be placed or left to find their own places at meals (Plu *QConv* 615C - 619A). Plutarch's description of a banquet hosted by Timon shows clearly the dilemma - a rich foreigner who arrived at a banquet did not find a prominent seat because places were not assigned according to rank, and left in a huff as a result (*QConv* 615D). The question is discussed in terms of the ideals of equality, good order and conviviality. The concern for such equality amongst guests and sociability are seen to be paramount in Plutarch's discussion, and therefore to

distinguish between guests would go against this objective. Plutarch's ideal symposium would be characterised by friendship based on equality, a mutual sharing together in the meal, enjoyment in conversation and no excesses in wine-drinking and entertainment (*QConv* 629C-716C).

The literary evidence on common meals pertains particularly to meals of the elite in cities. The caricatures of writers such as Juvenal were aimed at the banqueting customs of the elite. So too were the pictorial representations on vases. The information on meal customs amongst the lower classes comes mainly from inscriptions concerning the collegia which will be discussed below. What becomes clear from research into common meals is the similarity between meals regardless of setting. The description given above of a two-part meal is the sort of meal that would be found everywhere. According to Smith, the same meal was used in private houses, in trade halls and in public sanctuaries (1980:87). Verner has similar conclusions when he states that the meal custom

> ..in the ancient world was widely followed in a variety of settings and cultural contexts. Thus Romans, Greeks, Jews, and apparently Christians, followed the same basic format for a formal meal, whether it was a private meal, philosophical banquet, or religious meal (1981:319).

In other words, in the ancient world, the same form of meal was found whether the setting was "secular" or "sacred". In the words of Willis it is

> ...misleading to distinguish between secular and religious gatherings on the basis of their meals (1985:49).

Such a distinction is more a modern interpretation than an ancient one. We turn now to look at the contexts in which common meals occurred.

5.0 The Social Contexts of Graeco-Roman Common Meals

We have established that common meals were located either in public buildings such as temples, or in private settings, such as houses. The social organisation of the city meant that by far the majority of meals took place in houses. We have already stated that Graeco-Roman society at that time was a pre-industrial one in which resources were controlled by a few. Thus a prominent feature was the proliferation of social

groups, the so-called voluntary associations or collegia, at that time which addressed, unwittingly or intentionally, the basic social needs of people who had limited access to status and goods in the cities, that is the lower classes. Another group that was regarded as similar in many ways to the collegia was the philosophical school[20], a group which in outward appearance resembled collegia in that their social function was to meet the needs of a specific group, and held common meals as part of their social activities. The same could be said for the synagogue.[21] Both these groups were in outward appearance similar to collegia, and probably functioned in a similar way. They, together with the Pauline communities, were often regarded as collegia by Rome in the second century CE. The Romans were suspicious of groups forming and exercised control over the collegia, particularly in the provinces.[22] For our purposes we will not extend our examination of philosophical schools and synagogues, but will focus our discussion on collegia, as a representative social group, so to speak.

5.1 Voluntary Associations or Collegia

Voluntary association is a generic term used to refer to groups that formed themselves

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20 The general picture presented of philosophical schools is that they functioned as teaching institutions, consisting of groups of disciples who gathered around well-known teachers or philosophers (see Meeks 1983:82). What has become evident is that the philosophical schools functioned within the household setting, with its codes and regulations, and had some social organisation, a fact which, according to Meeks, has not been taken sufficiently into account (1983:82). Meeks suggests that the schools were similar in many ways to voluntary associations. One notable feature is that their philosophical activities were based in common meals (see further Meeks 1983:82-3, also Stowers 1984:66).

21 We have already established that there is no archaeological evidence for the existence of synagogues in Corinth in the first century. Yet literary evidence points to the presence of a synagogue in Corinth - Paul is recorded as visiting one (Acts 18:4). An explanation for this dilemma can be found, as Stambaugh and Balch bring to our attention, in the recognition that the word *sounagoge* need not necessarily refer to a building, but could be a reference to the assembly or gathering of people or a congregation (1986:48). The fact that there is no evidence for specially constructed buildings in Corinth probably means that Jewish congregations or gatherings met in places other than specially constructed buildings - in other words, they met in houses. White suggests that archaeological evidence from Dura could indicate that the development of the synagogue from private house to public building could have "parallelled (rather than preceded)" the development of Christian community from housechurch to public building (1990:8). It is likely that the synagogues, if they met in houses as suggested, followed the customs of household institutions, such as common meal practices and the benefaction of patrons. According to Meeks the Romans viewed synagogue congregations as collegia: at one time collegia were under Roman ban, except for "long established groups", and often synagogues came under this category (1983:35). Stambaugh and Balch reckon that

> ...Jewish synagogues ...probably appeared barely distinguishable from other collegia of this category (1986:125).

The lack of archaeological evidence suggests that the synagogue in first-century Corinth was not a well established institution.

22 Professional organizations were subject especially to Roman control, and in certain provinces were banned altogether. Long established collegia with proven histories of loyalty and service to communities were given special exemption and even privileges. Religious and burial collegia were generally allowed to function, albeit that at various times they were restricted to monthly meetings only (see Garnsey & Saller 1987:156-7; Stambaugh & Balch 1986:125).

into clubs for a particular purpose, such as religious or philosophical belief, occupation, family ties or place of birth. They possibly have Greek[23] origins but were as prolific in both Roman and Greek in the first century. Three types are generally identified: professional associations, religious societies and burial societies (see Stambaugh & Balch 1986:125, also Wilken 1984:36). The professional clubs were organized around common trades and occupations, such as merchants, shipowners, wool-workers, builders, carpenters and so on. According to Stambaugh and Balch, some professional clubs had a public responsibility to contribute to "the necessary economic services" of the city (1986:125). The religious clubs, the *collegia sodalicia*, were dedicated to a particular deity and were popular amongst foreigners, who through the formation of a club could worship their god(s). Despite the organisation by the state of Greek and Roman worship facilities, there was nothing to stop any group forming under the protection of one of the deities. The burial societies, the *collegia tenuiorum*, existed to ensure decent burials for members. Members of these collegia were normally those who had minimal resources and little guarantee that they would have a proper burial (see further Stambaugh & Balch 1986:124-27).

Much of what can be known about collegia comes from inscriptions, and Garnsey and Saller point out that many of these include details of by-laws and regulations governing them (1987:156). Many of the regulations of collegia were designed to curb excesses of merriment on the part of members during the meal. For instance, the regulations of an association called the Iobacchoi, whose patron deity was Dionysus, included a ban on what was considered to be disorderly conduct, which could be anything from singing to fighting to taking someone's couch (see Smith 1980:269-73; see also MacMullen & Lane 1992:64-78 for other examples of rules of collegia). It was the general custom of collegia to impose fines on their members for misconduct. Willis reckons that an examination of the regulations of collegia in Rome, Greece and Egypt indicates that misconduct was a "widespread problem" in meals (1985:55).

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[23] Dennis Smith believes that professional or trade guilds have Roman origins and later became prolific in the Hellenistic world (see Smith 1980:116). Sampley tells us that the Greek origins are "shrouded" because of minimal evidence from ancient Greece, but points out that the associations may even go back as far as the Babylonian era (1980:12, 18 n2).

According to Sampley, persons who joined together for a common purpose did so under a legal contract[24] (1980:13). There was no written agreement entered into as such, and no exchange of property or finance, but the verbal agreement[25] of persons to use property or labour or skills or even status for a common purpose was legally binding.

Some important points need to be made about the collegia in urban contexts. Firstly, the activities of collegia were not confined to one of the functions described above. According to Wilken most of the associations combined many if not all of the functions (1984:36). Even though it is popular to categorise them under three headings according to their function - professional, religious, burial - the evidence suggests that there is a great deal of overlap between them. For instance, even though one type of association was deemed to be purely religious, the other types, the professional associations and the burial associations, also incorporated a deity as part of their activities. It was a feature of the associations that they all embraced a deity, regarded as a patron deity, to whom worship was offered whenever the group met (Tidball 1983:86, Stambaugh & Balch 1986:140).

Similarly, all of the associations engaged in common meals. There is strong evidence that these meals formed a significant part of the festivities of most if not all of the clubs (see Stambaugh & Balch 1986:158-9, White 1990:47, Smith 1980:117). They also met for the most in household settings under the protection of a patron. Some of the clubs, such as one mentioned by White - the Bacchantes at Tusculum - comprised only the members of the household (1990:45).

Secondly, there is a close association between the structuring of collegia and the structure of networks in the Graeco-Roman world. They were located either in private

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24 This type of contract used by collegia was termed *consensual societas*, and each member was referred to as a *socius*, or partner. The duration of the contract depended on the partners continuing to hold a common aim, what was described as "being of the same mind". Apparently partners could be of different social backgrounds but once they formed this legal partnership, or *consensual societas*, they became equal partners (see further Sampley 1980:11-16).

25 This is in direct contrast to Jewish law where partnerships and agreements could not be formed on a verbal basis, but involved usually an exchange of property (see further Sampley 1980:18 n12).

houses or in dining rooms especially built for them by a patron. In either setting the members were subject to the organisational system that regulated relationships in households, that is, the patron-client network with its system of honour and shame. White reckons that the way "into the mainstream" (of social life) for new religious or ethnic groups was through the "[s]ocial conventions of patronage and benefaction" (1990:58-9).

Associations therefore functioned under the protection of a patron, whose gifts to the group would be rewarded by demonstrations of honour. Other income was derived from membership fees and fines levied for disorderly conduct or disregard of regulations. The monies were used to fund funerals for members, feasts on special occasions, such as the birthday of the patron or the patron god, and in some cases to provide club premises (see Stambaugh & Balch 1986:126).

In addition to this, the internal organization was a mirror of that in the wider society, having governing officials, termed *magistri*, in top leadership and others filling positions of treasurer, secretaries, stewards, priests and priestesses (see Stambaugh & Balch 1986:126; also Meeks 1983:31). Those filling these posts of officers would be members, who ordinarily may be slaves or trades people, and who would not have any status in the wider society.

Thirdly, the collegia served a particular function in that they provided for the needs of those who were disadvantaged in some way. They attracted mainly those who were not able to participate fully in the two basic institutions, the state and the household (see Banks 1980:16, also Meeks 1983:31). The clubs provided members with a sense of belonging that they could not experience elsewhere, giving them honour and status where and when they might not ordinarily experience it. Banks reckons that what the members shared in when they met together was *koinonia*, which he defines as, "a voluntary sharing or partnership" (1980:16). Wilken highlights the significance of the collegia in this depiction of club meetings:

> The regular meetings were occasions for eating and drinking, conversation, recreation. These meetings not only provided relief from the daily round of work; they also provided friends and associates for mutual support, an opportunity for recognition and honour, a vehicle by which ordinary men could feel a sense of worth. The society also gave people an opportunity for religious worship in a setting that was supportive, personal, and familiar (1984:39).

So it is clear that collegia were formed for the most part by the lower classes of Graeco-Roman society who were excluded from participating fully in the political life of the city. These social groups met around common meals in which a sense of belonging, equality and sociability was expected. The fact that entrance and fines levied were the same for everybody suggests that a measure of equality was experienced. It is generally agreed that a measure of sharing or *koinonia* was also experienced amongst members.

5.2 Similar Meals for Different Occasions

Meals as we have seen were eaten in both private and public settings, in houses as well as temple dining areas. We have discovered that the format of the meal was similar in both settings, having two parts to the evening's programme and including worship of a deity or deities. Meals were held for various occasions in both public and private settings. Willis reckons that even though public feasts would have catered for the largest numbers, it was the feasts in the private settings that featured most frequently (1985: 14). Such was the frequency with which they occurred that

> there would have been ample opportunity for most people (citizens. freedmen, and even slaves) to have some occasion to participate in such meals (Willis 1985:15).

There were various reasons for both upper and lower class groups to gather around a meal in households. Special occasions such as birthdays, weddings, and funerals were always celebrated with a feast. For instance, the birthday of the patron of the collegium would also be a reason to celebrate with a meal in the collegium's premises or the patron's home.

Other seemingly less noteworthy occasions also were marked by meals. Gooch refers to literary evidence for thanksgiving meals to celebrate, for instance, the safe return of friends, reunions, successes in various ventures, a victory of Caesar and so on (1993:35). It was a common occurrence for meals marking this type of celebration to be conducted within the context of collegia meetings. There could be occasions, however, when thanksgiving meals were held in temple precincts by groups who wanted to offer thanks to the deity for a cure or a birth etcetera, and who would use the dining-rooms to do so (see Murphy-O'Connor 1983:164). At the top of the list of celebrations were the holy days and feast days dedicated to deities, which would include a general distribution of meat to the entire city. Feasting on these occasions would be found in both temple and private house (see Gooch 1993:31-2).

Thus it is certain that most people living in a city such as Corinth would participate in common meals that were similar in nature. What is less certain is the nature of the food provided for the occasion. Was it food that had come from sacrificial ceremonies that was used in common meals and how widespread were sacrificial ceremonies, are two questions that should be asked.

5.3 Sacrifice and Food

According to Willis sacrifice played a central role in worship in all spheres and there was a close association between sacrifice and meal (1985:49). Gooch similarly concludes that food that had formed part of a sacrifice to a deity was eaten in private homes (1993:31). In other words, food that had been sacrificed to a deity in a temple would end up on a table soon after. The sanctuary of Demeter and Kore in Corinth is according to Gooch, a typical example of a cultic temple with sacrificial rites pronounced over food which could then be eaten (1993:12-13). Although literary evidence does not fully substantiate this fact, the numerous dining areas that have been found alongside the sanctuary and elements of votive offerings make it conclusive that food was "integral to Demeter worship...at Corinth" (Gooch 1993:13). Either pork or cereal was sacrificed at certain festival occasions or thanksgiving ceremonies, and worshippers could share in the rites and also eat the food sacred to Demeter.

Food also featured, though not as much, in the temple to Asklepios in Corinth. It was usual in such a temple for sacrifices to be offered by priests on behalf of the city or particular residents who wanted a cure or to give thanks for one. Political ties were maintained by means of sacrificial banquets when the cultic priest in one city, as representative of the deity, would extend invitations to citizens of another city (see Smith 1980:94-5, Gooch 1993:21). Such meals that occurred as a conclusion to a specific ceremony in the temple, termed the *phusia* or sacrificial meal, would normally take place in the banqueting halls of the temple.

Smith points out that some sanctuaries had laws which required the sacrificial meat to be eaten on the premises (1980:80). However, Gooch states that evidence indicates that this was not a universal law, and in fact in some cults food was taken off the premises (1993:23). It was either eaten in private establishments or sold in the open market. This would therefore mean that such food was freely available for use in meal festivities. However, it was not the only food available. According to Gooch, in the cult of Asklepios food that had not formed part of a sacrificial ritual was recommended or forbidden by the god for curative purposes (1993:21). Gooch suggests that the dining areas of Lerna would have functioned as part of the cult of Asklepios, but could also have been used in a way unconnected with the Asklepieion or any other sanctuary, and could possibly serve food "without a history of sacred use" (1993:26). However, it is likely that most foods passed through some religious rite, including ordinary foods such as cheese, bread, milk, honey and fruits (Gooch 1993:23). The staple diet of the majority of people in a city such as Corinth would be grains, bread, fruit and sometimes fish. Meat would be reserved only for special occasions (Witherington 1995:190, Theissen 1982:126). Generally, those of high status had the monopoly on meat during religious feasts. Witherington points out that

> If the poor got meat, it was likely at...a feast as part of a celebration involving eating in temple precincts or as a bequest given by the more well-to-do in hono[u]r of a god (1995:90).

We saw above that the imperial cult flourished in Corinth. Occasions such as the Caesarian games would be an occasion of feasting when it is likely that the meat was distributed to all in Corinth (see Chow 1992:151).

One of the customs, at least among the Mysteries, was to extend invitations to cultic feasts. Examples of these invitations have been recovered in Egypt relating to the cult of Sarapis and Isis, a cult that had considerable influence in Corinth in the first century CE. The normal format of such invitations was to invite worshippers to "the table" of the particular deity (see Witherington 1995:188). Paul used this expression in 1 Corinthians in his discussion on *koinōnia* and participating in pagan worship (10:21). According to Willis the table was "a standard feature of Greek sacrifice" (1985:16). The "table" was a reference to a table on which was placed food that had been set aside, after the sacrificial ritual had been completed, for the consumption of the deity. After the sacrificial ritual the food was apportioned three ways: one portion belonged to the deity and was burnt on the altar, the second portion was for consumption by worshippers, presumably to be eaten in a celebration meal, and the third portion was for the deity. This third portion was dedicated to the god and placed on the table especially set aside for that, "the table of...", placed there to be eaten by the god, but in fact eaten by the worshippers or the priest. From Willis' research it seems conclusive that this table

> would have been a possible source for meat sold in markets, and would have been especially significant for the various private associations...which gathered for regular (often monthly) banquets (1985:17).

However, it is not certain how many of the collegia would eat meat on a regular basis - the staple diet , as we noted above, excluded meat. Even though patrons generally provided provisions for collegia common meals, it appears from Pliny' account (see above page 40) of a banquet, that patrons would be anxious to conserve provisions where possible. Meat was expensive and only the very rich could afford it on a regular basis (Witherington 1995:189).

The type of public feasts that were customary in Corinth also spilled over into private situations. This fact according to Gooch is "clearly supported by the sources":

> This pairing of rite and meal in contexts of social importance is found in texts throughout the period, in descriptions of meals among both elite and common classes (1993:37).

This could mean that there was a notion of sharing in *koinōnia* with the deity, and certainly it meant sharing together with others in sacrificial occasions (see Reumann 1994: 41). It is likely that sacrificed food was freely available in markets for any group to purchase and use as part of their common meal gathering, or for groups to consume as part of the temple worship. The meals served a function in the society, that much is clear and we turn now to look at their social significance in a city such as Corinth.

6.0 The Social Significance of Meals

From our investigation thus far we can see that eating meals together was important. The fact that common meals were the primary social activity suggests therefore that they had some significance in the social interactions of a city. The first claim that can be made regarding meals, is that they acted as a means of confirming roles in society and relationships amongst participants. Meals therefore served as indicators of friendship and more significantly as indicators of status. Gooch sums it up adeptly when he says:

> In Greco-Roman society, you were what you ate, and - more important - you were whom you ate with (1993:38).

As we have seen both the quality of food served and the place at table assigned to guests would demonstrate to all the status of an individual. The lavish fare produced by the host was generally an indication of his importance in society. Petronius' satirical portrayal of the freedman Trimalchio, whose aim in life was to show off his wealth in imitation of those to whose class he could never ascend because of legal barriers, depicts such a notion (*Sat* 1 35). Trimalchio had status on one level of society and his lavish meals would be an indication of this. Similarly a person such as Erastus would also display status through lavish meals.

The company kept by individuals was a sign of their status. We have seen that a large following of clients indicated the importance of the patron. Clients in return for patronage would ascribe honour to patrons, including reserving for them the best place at meal occasions. In Seneca we read of the importance of being

> ...selective with regard to the man from whom I am to receive a benefit...and just as I should not receive an unworthy person into my friendship, so I should not receive such a person into the most sacred rights of exchanging benefits, which is the basis of exchanging friendship (*Ben* 2, 18.5, cited in Gardner & Wiedermann 1991:168).

From this statement we can surmise that exchanges of benefits would not necessarily be entered into lightly. A guarantee of exchange would at least be necessary, as suggested by Epictetus in his manual - someone who complained of not being invited to a meal was given the reason as being that he could not reciprocate in some way (*Ench* 25.4-5). Seneca warned against friendship with parasites who would have nothing to give (*Ep* 19). Plautus, on the other hand, saw the inclusion of parasites in the meal as a way of swelling a patron's entourage (*Men* 1, 1.1).

The other side of this cautionary note is that, as Gooch explains

> ...attendance at meals given by social superiors was the primary means for winning favours and benefits for many people in that society (1993:42).

Several sources point to the fact that a refusal to eat what was served or an unwillingness to participate in a meal or even a sacrifice was regarded as abnormal and "requiring justification" (Gooch 1993:43). Social progress corresponded therefore with the degree to which a person conformed to social norms such as those found in common meal practice. The importance of this is stressed in Seneca's argument on the virtue of abiding by social norms:

> The first thing philosophy promises us is the feeling of fellowship, of belonging to mankind and being members of a community; being different will mean the abandoning of that manifesto (*Ep* 5.3,4, cited in Gooch 1993:43).

This notion is similar to the symposium ideal already discussed above in which friendship, conviviality and equality are prised as common ideals. Meal practices in the collegia especially engendered a sense of belonging. We have already seen that the need for this was primarily evident amongst freedpersons and slaves. As such the meals in collegia could be seen to stand in the classical meal tradition, that is, an opportunity for friendships to be made and confirmed, when fellow diners gathered for a meal to share not only in food, but also friendship, and in essence, *koinōnia*.

Closely connected with the meal being an indication of status was the custom using the common meal as an occasion for attributing honour to individuals. Those of high rank could receive honour ascribed to them through their birth and legal status by participation as honoured guests in important meal occasions. For the participants in collegia meals it was likewise an occasion for receiving or bestowing honour. The patron of the collegium and also the chief official, the *quinquennalis*, would be honoured, for instance, with a feast on their birthday. They would be given places of honour and extra portions of food. For participants of meals in collegia it was primarily an opportunity to participate in a system from which they were normally excluded.

The practice in collegia of delegating offices to members was for the primary purpose of supervising proceedings during the common meal occasions and the responsibility of those in office included settling quarrels and dissensions during the meal. This practice not only created roles and responsibilities, and allowed members to exercise authority denied them in the wider society, but it also encouraged a sense of social obligation amongst the participants (see Smith 1980:175-77).

A final point that we want to make concerning the significance of food and eating common meals, is that they functioned in a particular way in society. This fact can be deduced from the research of anthropologists, such as Mary Douglas (1971) who proposes that food acts like an encoded message that is expressed in social relations:

> The message is about different degrees of hierarchy, inclusion and exclusion, boundaries and transactions across the boundaries (1971:61, cited in Corley 1993:20).

Within the meal itself are seen structures that represent the social structures outside of the meal, that is, in the macro-society. Corley draws attention to some interesting discoveries in anthropological studies[26] concerning meal patterns. What is suggested from these findings is that changes in meal patterns depend on the structure of the meal. The more structured the meal the less likely or more difficult it is to implement changes in the meal structure. An attempt to introduce new foods or customs into a highly

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[26] See for instance Douglas & Nicod (1974), and Goody (1982).

structured meal would meet with resistance (see Corley 1993:20-21). This insight could help to explain the problems in the Corinthian community which became obvious when they shared meals together.

7.0 Conclusion

In this chapter we have attempted to put together a picture of what Corinth was like in the first century. We have seen that Corinth had a predominantly Roman influence and was subject to Roman control. In common with pre-industrial societies there was a sharp division between the elite, those who owned land and controlled the movement of resources, and the non-elite, those who were in subservience in some way to the elite.

Social interactions were governed on a vertical scale and a horizontal scale by the system of patronage and clientism. On the horizontal scale individuals, usually of equal standing, would exchange help and resources in times of need. On the vertical scale an exchange was made between unequals, and offers of benefaction from superiors were made to inferiors in return for honour and support and so on. The system was the means whereby the elite secured their position and wealth, and those of less or no standing or material wealth were protected and given access to resources, or exploited and oppressed. There was little upward mobility, but it was possible for some to accrue wealth and achieve a measure of status, creating a small middle sector of civil servants. However, for the majority of peoples goods were in limited supply and in the hands of very few people. This included non-material goods such as honour and status.

We have seen that the primary social event was the common meal, the setting of which was in most cases the household. The common meal featured on everyone's calendar, and was the means of servicing clients and rewarding patrons through the exchange of goods and honours. A significant fact concerning common meals has emerged, viz, that the meal practice was virtually identical in whatever context it occurred. Both elite and non-elite, both Jew and gentile, both slave and free, both citizen and foreigner would experience the same patterns at meals. The only difference would be the fare

served and the entertainment or discussion during the symposium. This meant that the Corinthian community also had the same experience of common meal practice when it met together.

The term *koinōnia* is a significant one in the Graeco-Roman world, in that it represented the sense of belonging and friendship for which people searched, especially within the collegia. This notion of a desire for friendship and "brotherhood" is evident in the meal tradition portrayed in Greek and Roman literature, and in the regulations of collegia. The term also carried a sense of equality and this element found expression in the numerous collegia that sprang up in response to people's need. Through membership of the collegia participants were able to experience *koinōnia* in the context of a meal. An apt summary of the notion and prevalence of *koinōnia* in the Graeco-Roman world is given by Reumann:

> It was a world familiar with the searchings for, and offers of *koinonia* with one another and sometimes with a deity. People encountered the term not only through popular philosophies but in daily life. To Paul's description of "many gods and many lords" in Corinth (1 Corinthians 8:5), one could add, "many *koinoniai*" too (1994:41).

We are brought back to our questions on Paul's use of *koinōnia*. What connection can be made between the Christian common meal and *koinōnia*? According to Paul are the Christian common meal and *koinōnia* naturally related or is he bringing them together to make a specific theological point? Before we can answer that question we need to reconstruct the Corinthian community in the light of its social situation. This will form the substance of our next chapter.

CHAPTER THREE THE PAULINE COMMUNITY IN CORINTH AS SOCIAL COMMUNITY

1.0 Introduction

Our intention in this chapter is to reconstruct a profile of the Corinthian community. Our purpose in doing so is two-fold: to establish what the community was like in terms of social stratification and organisation, and to determine to what extent it resembled the Graeco-Roman world of which it was a part. We have seen that research on the social stratification of a city such as Corinth in the first century indicates that it was layered over several social levels. To achieve our purpose we shall investigate the social levels in the Corinthian community. We want to examine the social backgrounds of the members so as to determine the social interactions that existed in the community. Social stratification, organisation and networks are so intertwined that one area cannot be examined without insights emerging from the other two. In considering the Corinthian community as social community, the structural organisation of the community should inevitably be examined, and in doing so we will focus on the structures that pertain to the communities when they come together for a common meal.

2.0 Social Stratification in the Corinthian Community

Conclusions about social levels in the Pauline community are dependent primarily on prosopographic evidence, that is, the names of persons, their titles, customs, occupations, where they reside and so on, which gives some idea of the status and roles of members. Both Meeks and Theissen, like Judge (1960) before them, examine the prosopographic evidence and other evidence and reach the conclusion that the Pauline communities, including the one in Corinth, consisted of people of varying status and wealth. Several persons from Corinth are mentioned by Paul by name. One of those is Erastus (Romans 16:23),[27] a figure who is commonly used in the debate on social

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[27] It is not conclusive that Romans 16 was addressed to the Ephesians, and so it is assumed that the group mentioned in this chapter were in Corinth (see Malherbe 1983:65 n.13).

levels to point to the existence of persons with high social status. Erastus is described as *ho oikonomos teis poleos* which is a reference to his role in the city and the exact meaning of the term has been under debate (see Malherbe 1983: 72, Meeks 1983:58). Support for the claim that Erastus was an important official in Corinth arose on the discovery of a Latin inscription honouring an Erastus (as *aedile*) as the one who donated a paved courtyard to the city in response to his appointment (see Meeks 1983:58). Whereas it is not certain whether the Erastus of the inscription and the one in the Christian community are one and the same, it has been suggested that the term *oikonomos teis poleos* refers nevertheless to an important municipal official, something like city treasurer (see Theissen 1982:83). It is possible that Erastus, of Greek origins and a freedman, may have started out as treasurer and ended further up the social scale as *aedilis*. If this is so, then, in the light of what has already been established regarding Graeco-Roman social levels, Erastus would have been an important and also wealthy person in Corinth (see Meeks 1983:58-9, Theissen 1982:75-83, Furnish 19:25). He would have had influential connections in the city, would undoubtedly have fulfilled a role as patron in a household and within the social networks that went with the role. He could well have been one of the powerful members of the Corinthian community (1 Corinthians 1:26).

Other persons that are mentioned in the first letter are Crispus, holding the office of *archisynagogos*, Gaius, who is stated as having a household (1 Corinthians 1:14, cf Romans 16:23), and Stephanus of whom it was said that he was the first convert in Achaia (1 Corinthians 16:15). All three of these men are mentioned by Paul as being baptised by him personally (1 Corinthians 1:14). All three are also described as having households, which would indicate that they were wealthy. We have seen that to run a household then consisting of family, freedmen and slaves required a fair degree of wealth. That fact alone would substantiate a claim to wealth, but it is not necessarily an indication of status, contrary to what Theissen claims from his comparison of Corinthian households with Luke's accounts of householders, who in general had some status in the community (1982:87, cf Malherbe 1983:73 n 27).

The level of status of synagogue leaders such as Crispus is not certain, especially in the light of the harsh treatment metered out to Sosthenes the leader of a Corinthian synagogue (cf Acts 18:17, see Malherbe 1983:72). However, as a person of wealth and a leader he would have had honour amongst his own people, the Jews. He is thus viewed by some scholars as being of high status (see for example Meeks 1983:57, Theissen 1982:75). A leader in the synagogue, enjoying wealth and honour and wielding some authority, may on conversion to Christianity assume a similar role in the Christian community, but it is not known whether such a person on relinquishing his role in the synagogue, would then lose some of his clients and influence. The house of Crispus would have functioned as "synagogue", and upon his conversion to Christianity the whole household converted as well, in keeping with the social norms of their day (cf 1 Corinthians 1:14, Acts 18:8, see chapter two).

The household of Stephanus did likewise on his conversion. It is understandable that the extended family of the household should follow suit, as the household formed the economic base for its members who were also regarded in many cases as clients and therefore under some obligation to the patron (see chapter two).

Another householder mentioned by Paul was "a Gentile" named Titius Justus, with whom Paul stayed and whose house was next to the synagogue (Romans 18:7). Nothing much is known about Titius Justus other than what has been stated - it is not known whether he belonged to the Christian community or not, we can only assume that he did.

Women are also mentioned by Paul. Prisca (Priscilla) and Phoebe are two examples. Prisca and husband Aquila were tentmakers like Paul and probably of some independent means because they ran a household (Acts 18:2, cf Romans 16:3, 1 Corinthians 16:19). Aquila was Jewish and so even though both he and Prisca were independent with a degree of wealth, they would nevertheless not have high social standing because of their family background and occupation. Meeks tells us that Prisca's status is put higher than Aquila's because her name is more often than not mentioned before that of her husband (1983:59). Phoebe is described by Paul as

diakonos and *prostatis* in the Corinthian Christian community - at Cenchreae (Romans 16:1-2). There seems good reason to take as Judge does the meaning of *prostatis* as equivalent to the Latin *patrona* or patron(ess) (1960b:128, see also Meeks 1983:60, Chow 1992:101). As a patron Phoebe would be therefore someone of independence and wealth, and probably one of the leaders in the Corinthian community.[28]

Another woman mentioned is Chloe, whose "people" conveyed news of Corinth to Paul in Ephesus (1 Corinthians 1:11). Nothing much is known about Chloe, but her people are thought to be slaves or freedmen (see Theissen 1982:57, 92-94; Meeks 1983:59; Barrett 1968:42). Then Latin names are often an indication of status because they suggest strong Roman connections. Those with Latin names may have come from families who were awarded citizenship when sent to Corinth as colonists, or they may have acquired Latin names as slaves or freedmen of Rome (see Meeks 1983:59). This could apply to those with Latin names in Corinth, such as Achaicus and Fortunatus (1 Corinthians 16:17), and Quartus, Lucius and Tertius (Romans 16:21-3). Lucius was also Jewish - he is mentioned by Paul together with two other Christians, Jason and Sosipater, as "fellow-Jews" (Romans 16:21). Achaicus and Fortunatus formed part of a group sent by the Corinthian community to see Paul (1 Corinthians 16:17). Nothing much is said of them and various opinions have been offered. Their names could have humble origins, and they are taken by Meeks to be freedmen (1983:56-7), and by others to be slaves (Moffatt 1959:278, Fee 1987:831). Their acquired status is therefore not certain; as freedmen they could be wealthy and independent, and as slaves they would be dependent, but may have accrued some wealth. In the Roman colony of Corinth either of these scenarios could obtain.

A reference by Paul to low incidence of persons of noble birth within the Corinthian community (1 Corinthians 1:26) is generally used to infer that in fact then there were some in that category (see Theissen 1982:70). Out of the persons named in Paul's

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[28] It has been suggested that, as a woman, Phoebe (and other women) would not hold a position of leadership in the Corinthian community (see Banks 1980:146, Malherbe 1983:98). That women functioned as patrons in the Graeco-Roman world has been noted (chapter two). Even though there were few women patrons, it is likely that, as providers of food and household, they had some authority (see Meeks 1983:134). An indication that women functioned as Christian leaders can be found in Paul's letter to the Romans (16:7). Junia is mentioned as one of the prominent apostles in the community in Rome (see Meeks 1986:113).

correspondence Erastus mentioned above may be the only one who fits this description. Theissen suggests that "noble birth" (*eugeneis*) was a sociological description, and therefore concludes that the same could be said for "wise" and "powerful" (1982:72). He suggests that there was a group fitting this description in Corinth and that they were responsible for the divisions in Corinth. Division or conflict was a factor to be considered in assessing status and we shall return to this shortly.

Several examples can be cited in the Corinthian community as indications of persons with some measure of status in the wider community. The running of households as mentioned above, the holding of office by someone such as Erastus, and "noble" birth was an indication of status. So too, claims Theissen, was the ability to travel an indication of status. However, this is not a certainty, because, as pointed out by Meeks, travellers may be travelling on behalf of employer or master (1983:57). The ability to travel in the case of the Corinthians, then, may not be a clear indication of either status or means. Some seventeen people and groups of people are mentioned by name in the Corinthian correspondence and, on the basis of the criteria cited above, claims are made, for example by Theissen, that several "belong to the upper classes" (1982:95). Theissen identifies nine in all: Crispus, Erastus, Aquila, Prisca, Stephanas, Gaius, Phoebe, Justus Titius, and Sosthenes. Theissen claims, too, that Paul baptized only those who were from the wealthy group, giving the example of Crispus, Gaius and Stephanus (1983:55). So, for Theissen

> The result is clear. The great majority of the Corinthians known to us by name probably enjoyed high social status (1982:95).

The way in which Theissen uses criteria for assessing status is one-dimensional, however, and this has posed some problems. Theissen appears to suggest that wealth is a sign of high status. In terms of how networks operated in the first-century Graeco-Roman world, however, we have seen that status is determined by birth, origins or legally acquired rank. Status and power are a means to wealth, but wealth is not necessarily a means to status and power. Therefore owning a large house such as Gaius does is an indication of his wealth but not necessarily his status. Meeks has termed this predicament "status inconsistency" (1983:70). Meeks argues that the

evidence suggests rather that some Christians may rank high in status because of wealth, their Roman connections or select patrons, but in real terms, according to what was permitted within the fixed social orders of that era, may rank lower because of factors such as gender or origins. So that in the Christian communities there would be found wealthy men and wealthy women, whose "achieved status is higher than their attributed status" (Meeks 1983:73).

To use the expression "status inconsistency" as a description of status that is not commensurate with class is acceptable. In urban situations there did indeed appear to be such an inconsistency.[29] Problems arise when Meeks suggests that the "most active and prominent members" of Paul's communities were people of "high status inconsistency". He sees these people as belonging to a group that were "upwardly mobile". (1983:73). Meeks asks the question:

> Are there some specific characteristics of early Christianity that would be attractive to status-inconsistents? (1983:73).

Meeks infers that those suffering from status inconsistency might find their problem alleviated by joining a Christian group.[30] The problem with such a view is that there is no evidence that the Christian groups were regarded as the "in-groups", so to speak, in the first century. It is well known that by the second century when the distinction between Christian groups and Jewish groups was established, Christians came under persecution, which would hardly attract converts. There is also nothing to suggest that members would be guaranteed of position once they joined a Christian group, and may continue to feel deprived. Meeks almost seems to suggest that there was a group at that time who could be termed status-inconsistents and who felt deprived and were constantly seeking ways to address that dilemma, such as by joining the Corinthian community. However, it may be that Meeks idea concerning claiming status inconsistency is too much a contemporary one (see further Holmberg 1990:132). It

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29 Petronius' satire on the freedman Trimalchio is a typical example of the situation pertaining then. He is portrayed as an extremely wealthy freedman who could mix with the upper classes in some spheres but could never attain to their attributed status, that is, their class (*Sat*).

30 This theory has been questioned by a few scholars who, in reviewing Meeks' book, *The First Urban Christians*, have argued against this point (see Holmberg 1990:132).

may be more accurate to state, as suggested by Rohrbaugh, that people at that time would have been anxious about losing status because of the uncertainty of circumstances, the

> ...precarious nature of their position in the world (1987:543).

In chapter two our examination of the prevailing norms of society then showed up the exact precariousness of that position. The treatment often metered out by those in power to those of the lower strata of society would have forced the latter to find ways of survival. Status was a commodity that was for sale at many prices. Inconsistencies concerning status did probably exist in Corinth due to the legal barriers separating the classes, but it cannot be confirmed that status inconsistency was a primary motive for joining groups such as the Corinthian community.

It would be inaccurate to ascribe, as Theissen does, too high a designation of status to individuals. For one thing, we need to bear in mind that there is a difference between status and class, as pointed out by Gager (1983:439). So when Theissen assigns at least nine members of the Corinthian community to the upper classes, in reality it should be a reference to status not class. From the ranks of the majority of people living in Corinth who comprised the task force of an administrative city, that is, freedmen and slaves, can be found people of status, but it is only the small elite governing group, headed up at one point by Gallio (cf Acts 18:12), and comprising one or two senators and a few equestrians, who could be described as belonging to the Roman notion of upper class.

It seems reasonable to conclude, therefore, that social levels in the Corinthian community were mixed. We can deduce that the sort of people found in the communities included freedpersons and slaves, some of whom were men and women of independent means, and some probably from Caesar's household, who would be in Corinth as we are led to believe as part of the "civil service". It is likely, but not conclusive, that there were a few persons (equestrians?) further up the social ladder who were of noble birth (cf 1 Corinthians 1:26). There may be one or two, like Erastus, who was of an acquired privileged position and a "powerful" (1 Corinthians

1:26) person in the wider community. There would be both Jews and Greeks, and numerous foreigners that would form the slave population. Possibly Greek aristocrats had settled in Corinth and they would perform the function of decurions.

The Christian community was probably not fully representative of Corinthian society and neither the empire, for in the words of Meeks, there is little evidence that would suggest that the "extreme top and bottom of the Graeco-Roman social scale" are included in the list (1983:73). Agricultural labourers and peasants classified as lower class would probably not be found in Corinth, and there is no indication that the landed aristocracy, or senators, and such like were members of the Christian communities, nor for that matter the jobless poor who would be classified as the bottom of the social scale.

3.0 The Corinthian Community as Social Group

We have already stated in chapter one that one of the approaches to an examination of the social organisation of the Pauline communities is to compare them with social groups in existence in the first century, such as the collegia. The Christian community in Corinth shared certain similarities with the collegia. Like the collegia, they met in private houses, for the first-century CE, at least, as it was probably only in the second or third century that the transition to more formal church buildings took place (see White 1990:110). Several people in Corinth, as we have seen, could have hosted a group of Christians at their house.

A study of the terminology used by both collegia and the Christian communities does not yield many terms that are common to both. The term *ekklesia* is used by Paul fairly extensively, and has a history of use in Greek social situations including associations. In Greek normative use it refers to the meeting itself (see Judge 1960a:45, Meeks 1983:79). Meeks suggests that the use of this term in the way that Paul does would have been out of character with its normal use in Graeco-Roman society (1983:108). Paul uses it to distinguish the Christians groups in houses, but also to refer to the conglomerate body of Christians (see Meeks 1983:75).

Three terms can be identified that are at once common to the Christian communities and the collegia: *episkopos*[31] (Philippians 1:1), *diakonos* (Romans 16:1, Philippians 1:1) and *prostatis* (Romans 16:2) (see Meeks 1983:79, Stambaugh & Balch 1986:140). In Roman colonies the Latin for *prostates* is used, that is *patronus*, or patron (see Judge 1960:128). In the context of collegia the term refers to a function or title such as presiding officer (see Meeks 1983:79). As we have already seen the title patron was given to Phoebe in Cenchreae, and who was also described as *diakonos* (Romans 16:2). This is a term used in collegia with reference mainly to the function of waiting on tables (Meeks 1983:79).

Other similarities between the collegia and the Christian communities can be pinpointed: membership was by "free association" and not birth, although entrance into the Christian community was also accompanied by an initiation which may not have been so for all collegia. The practice of the common meal would be by far the most common feature of both Christian community and collegium. As we have already discovered, the format of the meal was replicated in numerous aristocratic dining rooms, collegia rooms and temple dining areas all over the empire. Thus the meal in the Corinthian community would be recognisable as comprising both deipnon and symposium, and would differ from collegia only in content, that is, in perhaps the food offered and in the focus of the symposium. Both were open to cultic activities (see Judge 1960a:40, Meeks 1983:78). The primary difference between Christian community and collegium would be the homogeneous nature of the membership. The Corinthian community comprised a cross-section of society in terms of occupation, status and gender, whereas the collegia were formulated along the lines of common professional, family or status (or lack of it) ties and were therefore more homogeneous in membership (Meeks 1983:79)

The symposium of the Christian meal would probably have features in common with synagogues, for example, scripture reading and prayer, but, as Meeks puts it, Paul did not emulate "the specific organization of the synagogue" (1983:81). The word

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[31] This term was, as Meeks points out, hardly used in the first century to refer to office in the Pauline communities (1983:79-80).

synagogue is not used by Paul to describe the gathering of Christians, nor does he use the terms that refer to official positions in synagogues. In addition to that, women had a more significant role in the Christian communities (see Meeks 1983:81, Stambaugh & Balch 1986:142). The primary rituals, such as circumcision, are rejected by Paul if not by all of the communities, and Meeks reckons that it is the stand that Paul and company take concerning circumcision that points to a radical difference in belief system, and ultimately practice, between the communities and synagogues (1983:81).

Similar features to the Christian communities could be found in the philosophical schools, or "philosophical collegia". They trained recruits, and the mode of teaching was similar, especially by Paul (see Stambaugh & Balch 1986:142-3). The strongest common feature was their organisation around households. We can agree with Meeks concerning the schools when he says that they

> ...resemble the Pauline communities just to the extent that they take the form of modified households or voluntary associations (1983:84).

This could equally well be said for the synagogue. We believe that it is not too strong a claim to make that all social groups - Christian community, philosophical school, synagogue, collegium - were tied into the household as the primary social institution.

4.0 The Corinthian Community and the Household

In meeting in houses, the Corinthian community was dependent on the household institution for means and access to economic and social resources. Wealthy members therefore provided houses as meeting places for the Corinthian community. Persons such as Gaius, Crispus, Stephanus, Phoebe, and Prisca and Aquila would as householders have sufficient means to function as patrons in the Christian community. In each case their whole household,[32] both kin and fictive kin, were included as part of the Christian community (cf Acts 16:32).

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[32] There is no indication that the members of households in Corinth resisted changing their familiar worship patterns, but as is evident from other places, the possibility of resistance was a reality (cf Philemon 12-21).

Paul's statement to the church at Corinth "when you come together" (*synerchesthai*) would probably refer to the whole group in view of the fact that the letter is addressed to the church at Corinth, and not to specific Christian groups (1 Corinthians 1:2). However, it is probable - almost certain - that Paul's letters were circulated amongst Christian groups, although there is nothing in the letter to suggest so. Paul refers to Gaius as "host" (*xenos*) to the church at Corinth, which could be a reference to a gathering of the entire church (Romans 16:23). The usual expression used by Paul to refer to a Christian group is *kat oikon ekklesia*, that is "the church at ___'s house" (cf 1 Corinthians 16:19, Romans 16:5, Philemon 2). It is possible that, as stated by Meeks, the fact that Gaius is mentioned in this way should indicate that it was a gathering of the entire church at his house, and that the church gathered at his house every time the common meal was eaten (1983:143). We can assume from the mention in Acts (18:10) of "many people" (*laos polus*) in Corinth who were Christian, and from the number of people mentioned by name in Corinth that the church there was in fact quite sizeable. If this was so, then the house of Gaius would have been quite large and probably would have resembled the one at Anaploga.

The primary purpose of the entire Corinthian community coming together in the house of Gaius was to celebrate in a common meal. It is not known how often the Christians came together for the meal, but by the second century CE it appears they met weekly on a particular day - mention is made by Pliny of Christians doing so in Bithynia (*Ep* 10.96.7). Some indication in the Corinthian correspondence is given of what happened when the Christians met together for the meal. The deipnon was followed by the symposium in which teaching, singing, prayer, scripture reading, and so on took place (1 Corinthians 14:26).

At least two requisites for the gathering can be perceived, viz, the provision of food and the leadership of the gathering. Provision of food was made probably by patrons, and so Gaius and those already identified as possible patrons provided both meeting place and fare for the gathering. Leadership did not appear to be rigid and hierarchical, as we will see from an investigation into the internal structures of the Corinthian community.

4.1 Internal Structures

The general observation is that in the Pauline (and Acts) material no reference is made to formal offices within the Christian communities (see Meeks 1983:134, Banks 1980:150). There is some evidence, however, that points to the functions of persons and their role in the communities. For instance, the list of functions in 1 Corinthians 12 (apostle, prophet, teacher etc) could be the beginnings of ranking, but as regards leadership function, nothing much is said beyond that everything should be done according to order (1 Corinthians 14:40). There is no indication that someone in particular supervised the Christian meal.

The role of apostle was important. Apostles, such as Paul, tended to function outside of the local Christian communities. Paul visited many communities in his role as apostle, and the style of leadership that comes across in the letters (typically Greek of course), was not authoritarian, but rather one of encouragement, exhortation and persuasion (see further Holmberg 1978:97-107, 197). The title apostle[33] as such did not represent an office in the Pauline communities in the first century, but signified rather the tasks that were important, and also served to sustain authority amongst the Christians (see Meeks 1983:131). Thus Paul's letters and visits were a supportive measure in his role as apostle.

Certain people are mentioned as significant in their role in the Corinthian community, and Paul urges the church to follow their lead. Stephanus is one such person who is given a special mention by Paul as a fellow worker who with his household had "devoted" himself to serving fellow Christians (1 Corinthians 16:15). Prisca and Aquilla who acted as patrons and benefactors both to Paul and the Christian groups wherever they settled, were regarded as effective teachers and evangelists (Acts 18:26). It is significant that these people also had a role as patron in Corinth as well as in the Corinthian community, and it may be as suggested by Meeks that

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[33] The Greek word for apostle conveyed the sense of agent or representative or messenger, that is, someone sent on a particular mission. Thus Meeks likens the word ambassador as having the same task (1983:131, cf 2 Corinthians 5:20).

> ...a position of authority grows out of the benefits that persons of relatively higher wealth and status could confer on the community (1983:134).

This probably applied to the Christian community at Thessalonica, the case in point cited by Meeks, where Paul describes the leadership role as one of encouragement and correction. The leaders could also be the patrons, because the word for those in authority, *proistamenoi*, could mean - in addition to "preside over" - to "act as patron" (Meeks 1983:133-34). There was no formal selection process for leadership roles, however, and if patrons also served as leaders then it may be because that was their normal role in society. They were accustomed to fulfilling a benefaction role which would then be continued in the context of the Corinthian community. There is good reason for suggesting this as the probable situation, as it could explain the actions of the Christian community when they met for a meal. This is a concern which will be addressed in our next chapter, when we examine the Corinthian community in the context of the common meal. The idea that patrons fulfilled the role of leadership in the Christian communities can find support also in the household codes, the so-called *Haustafel*, which in some communities were adapted later "for moral instruction among Christians" (see Meeks 1983:76, 1986:113, cf Colossians 3:18-4:1, 1 Peter 2:13-3:7).

Paul referred to the Corinthian Christians as "fellow workers" (1 Corinthians 6:1), and in other places called them "partners" - the members were in partnership together in the task of proclaiming the gospel (Philippians 1:5). He puts forward the idea that the partnership is binding and long-term. He uses the word *koinonia* to describe the permanent nature of the community relationships (Galatians 2:9, Philippians 1:5).[34] We can see the same notion of partnership expressed in other situations. For instance, Paul's exhortation to Philemon to restore his runaway slave, is based on the notion of partnership (Philemon 6 (*koinonia*), 17 (*koinonon*). Philemon's slave, Onesimus, becomes for Paul a beloved brother (Philemon 16).

Paul, in his contact with other Christian communities, also uses *koinonia* to describe

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34 Sampley suggests that Paul uses legal language, the language of *societas*, with reference to this partnership. For instance, in Galatians (2:9) the expression "the right hand of fellowship (*koinonias*)", Sampley states is a legal term for partnership (1980:29, 66-79).

the type of relationship the Christians have with the Spirit: "fellowship" (or partnership, or participation) with the Spirit (Philippians 2:1). As Marshall points out, Paul links their task with the Spirit, because he wants to emphasise the community's common attitudes, common love for each other, and a common purpose (1992:44).[35] This notion of common sharing Paul sees as transcending gender, race and class barriers (Galatians 3:28), and also physical boundaries. This is borne out by his encouragement of the Christian communities to help the Christians in Jerusalem with the so-called collection (cf Romans 15:26, 2 Corinthians 9:13).

Paul also talks about the Christians sharing (*koinōnian*) in the sufferings of Christ (Philippians 3:10). This is probably a reference to persecution from the pagan world and possibly the so-called Judaizers (see Martin 1976:83, 134). Paul in his correspondence with the Corinthians refers to the suffering he experienced as part of his mission (1 Corinthians 4:9-13).

The idea of partnership amongst Christians, which Paul appears to convey, carries a sense of equality rather than hierarchy (cf Galatians 3:28). An interesting factor is that Paul uses the word *koinōnia* to describe elements of the horizontal relationships in the Christian communities.

It would appear that Paul's notion of how the community should be structured were not along hierarchical lines, with power invested in one person or a group who then ruled over other members. Banks suggests, and Meeks is not far away from this view, that authority rested in the ministry exercised by members and was given to all "without exception" (1980:151). Banks further says that the structure in the communities was "theocratic" and also democratic (1980:150-51, see also Holmberg 1978:119). What Banks means by this is that all members contributed to the welfare of the community under the direction of the Spirit.

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35 Sampley suggests that the notion of common goals and attitudes is another indication of a formal partnership. The expression "of one mind" is commonly used in a societas contract (Sampley 1980:66-72).

Meeks suggests that the methods of authority used within the communities can be categorised as:

> visible manifestations of Spirit-possession, position, and association with apostles and other supralocal persons of authority (1983:136).

This notion of the Spirit playing an active role in terms of authority, could be attributed to Paul's statement to that effect (cf 1 Corinthians 7:40). Some people, says Meeks, had a "specific warrant" to be obeyed, such as, for example Stephanus. The problem of legitimacy arises as to who should have a warrant to exercise authority; Paul himself never appealed to the legitimacy question, and this only became an issue later when the church became more institutionalised (see Meeks 1983:137). Paul rather adopted the attitude of servanthood in his relationship with the Christian communities (cf Philippians 2:5-7, 1 Corinthians 9:19).[36] Meeks suggests that the structure of authority was "fluid":

> The impression is one of great fluidity, of a complex, multipolar, open-ended process of mutual discipline (1983:139).

It appears difficult to pin down exactly the structural organisation of the Corinthian community.[37] This may be because within Paul's correspondence there is an apparent difference between what Paul expects and what happens in the community (see Barrett 1982:1), and how it is perceived from the outside.

4.2 Boundaries

Claims have been made by some, such as Meeks and Banks, that the communities were a distinctive group at that time. Meeks argues, for instance, that the structures formulated by the communities "may have been unique" (1983:84). The reason Meeks

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[36] However, there was an expectation in Paul that the Christians would obey his directives (cf 1 Corinthians 4:21, 5:1-5)

[37] For a full discussion on structures of leadership in the Pauline communities see Holmberg (1978). Holmberg refers to the authority in the communities as "charismatic authority", but he uses it according to Weber's definition, which is different to how Paul regarded the role of the Spirit to be (see Holmberg 1978:140-161).

gives for this argument is that none of the Graeco-Roman social groups such as the collegium, synagogue and school "captures the whole of the Pauline *ekklesia*" (1983:84).

Paul's idea of community is regarded by Banks as distinctive from other contemporary ideas at that time, because he says unlike other communities, such as the Jewish ones which focused their participation around a code, the Christian communities centred on fellowship, both with God and with one another. He sees their focus in relationship, and in the fact that "God communicated himself to them...through one another" (1980:111). Banks reckons that Paul adopted elements from other models, such as the synagogue, only in so far as it was germane to do so. Banks rightly concludes that Paul's idea of community was centred in gospel realities:

> Christ's sacrificial service stands as the model and motive for those who have special responsibilities in the community, including Paul himself; Christ's resurrection power acts as the source of the unity between the community's members and as the dynamic and structure of the gifts and ministries exercised within it. So Paul's understanding of community is nothing less than the gospel itself in corporate form (1980:188-9).

The particular view held by Meeks and Banks that the structures were informal and distinctive or unique needs to be examined in terms of the lines that can be drawn between the community and the outside world. The boundaries of the communities are considered particularly by Meeks in terms of the internal social cohesion of the communities (1983:85).[38] The lines drawn between the communities and the outside world can be seen, as we have suggested, from two perspectives, from inside the communities and from outside. Although we are dependent partially on Meeks for this insight, we differ from him in that Meeks appears to conflate both perspectives into one view and thereby reaches the conclusion that the structures of the communities were unique.

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[38] Meeks has based his work on Leon Festinger and Brian Wilson. Meeks quotes Festinger's definition of social cohesion as: "the resultant of all the forces acting on the members to remain in the group" (1983:85, see 224 n 64). Wilson' s work is stated by Meeks in terms of "responses to the world" by different "sects" (1983:85, 224 n 65).

4.2.1 The Insider View

The view from the inside would have to do with the self-understanding of the community, or at least the understanding Paul gives to the ethos of the community. We can identify lines drawn between the greater society and the Corinthian community. For instance, it can be seen that lines are drawn between Judaism and Christianity (2 Corinthians 3:7-18). Paul establishes that the reason for the Christians meeting together is focused on Christ through whom a new covenant is mediated in place of the old one through Moses (1 Corinthians 11:20, 2 Corinthians 3:7-18). Entry into the community was through baptism not circumcision. Paul expects that sole allegiance should be given to Christ and that a close relationship should exist between members. They owed allegiance to Christ, they belonged to God and were members of the same body or family, and relationships were to be governed by love (1 Corinthians 12:12ff, 13).

The "language of belonging", is a phrase used by Meeks to describe the internal cohesion of the Christian communities (1983:85). Members are seen to be part of the same family, and are referred to as "brother"[39] and "beloved" (1 Thessalonians 1:4,6); they are regarded as children of God (Romans 8:15-16) and of the apostle Paul (1 Corinthians 4:14-15). This familial description may be seen as patterned on the household, that is, in terms of father and child, of paterfamilias and extended family. They express the type of "close personal ties" between members and the writer of the letter.[40]

Paul refers to the members as "saints" and "holy ones" (1 Corinthians 1:2, 2 Corinthians 1:1), reinforcing the notion of a special people, and also reminiscent of Old Testament references to Israel (see Meeks 1983:85). The idea of a special people is

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[39] Meeks states that there are sixty-five instances in the "undoubtedly authentic letters" where Paul uses the term "my brothers" (1983:87). These family terms are used more often in the Pauline letters than in other early Christian literature.

[40] It is possible, as suggested by Meeks, that the terms came from Paul's Jewish background. The use of familial terms has biblical examples (Exodus 2:11, Leviticus 19:17), and was used in the Diaspora (see Meeks 1983:87, 225 n 74 and 75). If this is so, then they would be reinforced by the Graeco-Roman family patterns.

further enforced by the entry ritual to the Christian community, that is, baptism. Using language of belonging and of participation in the context of baptism, Paul describes members as having a new identity in Christ, and as one body without distinction between members on the grounds of race, gender or class (cf Galatians 3:28, 1 Corinthians 12:11). So, too, the language of participation can be found in the meal: "one body", "partake of one bread" (1 Corinthians 10:16). Meeks suggests rightly that there is a strong link between baptism and Christian meal: both are symbols of "communitas", both remind the believers of the death of Jesus, and the unity symbolised by baptism becomes visible in the meal (1983:153-59).

Lines are also drawn between the Christian communities and the outside world. This becomes observable in what Meeks calls the "language of separation" which, if taken together with the language of belonging, reinforces the idea that the members are special (1983:94-5). For instance, those who are not members of the communities are called "outsiders" (1 Corinthians 5:12), or "non-believers", or "unrighteous" (1 Corinthians 6:1,9). Similarly, a separation is made between what Christians were before joining the community and what they are as members - once they did not know God, now they do (Galatians 4:1-11). Paul makes a clear divide between members and non-members, that is, between believers and non-believers: they have nothing in common between them (2 Corinthians 6:14).

Thus the language of separation distinguishes between the Christians and outsiders, that is, the pagan world and the so-called opponents of Paul. Paul refutes the authority of his opponents who pose a threat to the parameters of the community by presenting different criteria for entry. The social cohesion of the communities is threatened from within as well as from without, by insiders who refuse to recognise the importance of fellow members and do not consider them as members of the same body, or when members indulge in wrongdoing which leads to their excommunication (for example, 1 Corinthians 5:2ff).

Rituals, says Meeks, such as baptism and the Christian common meal, also act as a divider between the Christians and the outside world (1983:88, 157-160). The common

meal served to reinforce the internal cohesion of the communities, and "to protect its boundaries" (Meeks 1983:160). According to Meeks the beliefs held by the communities also drew them together and emphasised their distinctiveness (Meeks 1983:85-96).

Meeks sums up what he regards as the distinctiveness of the communities thus:

> ..Paul and the other founders and leaders of these groups engaged aggressively in the business of creating a new social reality. They held and elaborated a distinctive set of beliefs....They developed norms and patterns of moral admonition and social control that...in ensemble constituted a distinctive ethos. They received, practised, and explicated distinctive ritual actions. All drew upon the common language and culture of the Greek-speaking, Roman provincial cities as well as upon the special subculture of Judaism...The resultant, nevertheless, was an evolving definition of a new, visibly different subculture (1983:104-5).

Although we can agree with this description of the Pauline communities, and perhaps also with Meeks suggestion that the Christianity of the first century did develop into a subculture, or a counterculture, the lines that are drawn are those that are perceived from the inside of the communities. The lines are ostensibly drawn by Paul and enforced perhaps by other leaders. They present a picture of what the community could be like in its ideal mode, and consist of structures which, in the words of Meeks, "are in the process of developing" (1983:89). Meeks is correct in his observation that the structures will still be dependent on those already in place, will change in response to the rituals and beliefs of the members, but will always retain a tension between "structure and anti-structure" (Meeks 1983:89).[41] Witherington offers a succinct summary of what could be viewed as Paul's notion of boundary:

> For Paul the boundaries of the Christian community should be defined theologically (one God and one Lord with no participation in worship of false gods) and ethically (no sexual immorality), but not socially or ethnically. All social levels, all races, all ethnic groups, and both gender can be Christians as they are (1995:201).

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41 Meeks uses Victor Turner's phrase to express the idea that the Pauline communities will be characterised by a strong internal cohesion, but will contend with strong external pressures that it will have to meet through the establishment of some pattern of order. An example cited by Meeks is the insistence that in Christ there are no gender differences, but as worked out in practice, females will continue to adhere to the dress codes that are set by the greater community (see further Meeks 1983:89-90).

We would go so far as to say that this is a summary of the insider view, which is ostensibly Paul's view of what the structure of the community should be. Similarly, the picture of the Pauline communities presented by Banks is a view from the inside - as the title of his book suggests, Banks presents Paul's *idea* of community. We suggest that in the community itself a different picture obtained, and in Paul's Corinth the perception of the Corinthian community by the locals was different.

4.2.2 The Outsider View

From the point of view of the Corinthian man-in-the-street, so to speak, and the governing authorities of the empire, the Corinthian community and indeed the Pauline communities in general, we believe, did not have such a distinctive appearance, particularly in the first century. We have already seen that Christian groups fell under the general ban on collegia in the second century. Once the Christian groups became more distinguishable from Jewish groups, they were regarded as a threat by Rome in the same way that collegia were suspected of being subversive groups.[42] This is clear evidence that the Pauline communities in external appearance were a social group like any other social group in existence then.

So viewed from the outside the Corinthian community was probably mistaken for a collegium.[43] We have already established that they engaged in activities reminiscent of collegia, especially the common meal. The Christians had regular meetings when they ate a meal together in celebration of what must have appeared to outsiders as their patron-deity. If, like collegia, the Corinthian community had to be registered as a legal requirement, then even more so would they have appeared to be a collegium. The Christians met in houses under the protection and provision of persons who would be classed as patrons.

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[42] See Pliny's letters: *Ep* 10 96.8, 10 97.7.

[43] In later years outsiders, and even Christians themselves, termed the communities *thiasos*, a word often used to designate collegia (see Malherbe 1983:88).

The point we are making is that from the inside the Corinthian community, and indeed the Pauline communities in general, could be said to be unique or distinctive. They were not like other groups because other groups did not have the same symbols, that of the Messiah, the crucified Christ, and so on. But in terms of their external boundaries an outside observer would see no difference between them and the collegia. The observable boundaries would be the external features of meeting place, patron, common meal, libations, initiation and other rituals, and symposium. It would not have seemed strange to an outside observer that there were both Jew and Greek in the same group, because it is likely that the community was mistaken for a Jewish group (see above page 42). The fact that women, such as Phoebe and also Prisca, would have fulfilled the role of patron may have appeared to be a normal occurrence, even though there were few women fulfilling that role (see above page 28). What may have come across as different, was a women fulfilling the role of patron of a diverse group, such as the community could have been.

The primary external difference, however, was that they were not a socially homogeneous group but included members from many more social stratas than did the average collegium. This fact adds weight to our discussion on the presence of conflict in the Corinthian community which we will consider shortly. The fact that the Corinthian community was not homogeneous might have bearing on the problems that seemed to be present in the community. The perspective from the outsider which sees the Corinthian community as a social group conforming to social patterns may in fact add to our understanding of the shortfall between Paul's expectation and the reality regarding their social relationships. The Corinthian community were not living up to the ideals that were presented by Paul in his letter, because for various reasons they were a divided community.

5.0 A Divided Community

That there were conflicts resulting in division within the Corinthian community is generally accepted by scholars (see Schuetz 1982:15; Theissen 1982:28, 40; Barrett 1982:4, 22; Dahl 1967:323; Chow 1992:94-5). The reason for Paul's visits and

correspondence has been usually attributed to the conflicts or potential conflicts within the Corinthian community. Paul states that he was informed by Chloe's people of quarrels within the community (1 Corinthians 1:11). Several dissensions can be identified in Paul's correspondence to the Corinthian community. There was rivalry amongst the members over the prominence of leaders who had baptised them, with the result that groups were developing in the community (1 Corinthians 1:11-17). Ostensibly there were at least two groups, one claiming to follow Paul, the other Apollos[44] (1 Corinthians 3:4). Paul addresses the problem at length, and refers to the Corinthians as immature when they should be mature and leading others (1 Corinthians 3:1-2, 4:8).

Another point of possible conflict was the issue of sexual immorality (1 Corinthians 5:1-11). This particular issue had not affected the Corinthian community as Paul expected it to - they carried on as normal without grieving or mourning over the situation (see Barrett 1968:122). A further dispute was that concerning lawsuits amongst themselves. Instead of settling a matter as between family members, they were resorting to the law courts (1 Corinthians 6:1-11).

The primary conflict, however, addressed in Paul's first letter could be said to be the one centred on the common meal and including the eating of food sacrificed to idols (1 Corinthians 8-10, 11:17-33). The issue on food is addressed at length by Paul, signifying its importance. It continued to be an issue in the early church where the general stance to eating sacrificed food was that it should not be eaten - this was particularly so amongst Jewish Christians who were possibly following the so-called Jerusalem decree (see Ehrhardt 1964:276-90).

The problems revealed in Paul's discussion on the common meal had to do with disparity in the provision for the meal and in its eating (1 Corinthians 11:20-21). There were both excesses and deprivations amongst the participants and very little cognisance taken of the reason for meeting, that is, to share together in a meal of remembrance.

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[44] There are some who believe that a third group followed Peter. A claim is made by Barrett, for instance, that Peter challenged Paul's authority in Corinth, particularly over the issue of eating food sacrificed to idols (1982:40-59).

The seriousness of the matter is exemplified by Paul's contention that neglect of the meal tradition handed down to them by him would result in God's judgement (1 Corinthians 11:29). The importance of the meal is emphasised by Paul in his discussion on eating food sacrificed to idols (1 Corinthians 8-10). Paul contrasts the Christian common meal with one in a pagan setting and issues a warning that members of the Corinthian community could not participate in both Christian and pagan meals (1 Corinthians 10:21). To do so would be tantamount to the same sort of disobedience as had occurred in ancient Israel, who had as a result incurred God's judgement (1 Corinthians 10:6-10).

The divisions found within the community and especially when the Corinthian community met for a common meal, or attended private or public meals where food sacrificed to idols may be eaten, caused Paul to respond with his ethos of *koinonia* which he apparently regarded as an appropriate resolution. Why he does so will be one of the questions taken up in the next chapter. So, too, will be the question of the apparent differences among members that were causing division. The cause of the division over eating meals or foods, could be attributed to differences between Jew and Gentile, or to differences along social lines, between rich and poor, or to a combination of factors. The social context, as we have already intimated will form our focus for understanding the divisions in the Corinthian community.

6.0 Conclusion

The Corinthian community had a distinct social appearance. It had the outward appearance of a social group in Corinth. The Corinthian community met for common meals like other groups, and was dependent on the household institution and patrons for the means to meet together. Several persons within the community can be recognised as patrons with means to host the community for its common meal gathering. Whole households belonged to the community, as a result of the conversion of the paterfamilias. Women functioned in a patronal role, although it is not clear as to the exact nature of their role. Gaius appears to have been the host for the entire community during the Christian meal.

It is important to differentiate between the internal and external view of the community. From the outside observer the community looked like any other social group, and for some considerable time Christian communities were seen as a sect of Judaism. From the inside the community may have appeared as a distinctive group, because its focus was on the Christian God, its members were drawn from different social stratas, and the leadership was invested in those with the Spirit. Paul in his relationship with the community had particular expectations of what the relationship should be between members and himself. In using family terms, he presents the Christian communities as a family with allegiance to God. The relationships between members are, according to Paul, of a permanent nature and should be characterised by love. Paul describes the members as fellow workers and partners, and often uses the word *koinōnia* to represent that notion. However, the Corinthian community did not live up to Paul's ideal picture. There were factors at work that had resulted in divisions in the community, and it is to an examination of this that we now turn.

CHAPTER FOUR EATING AS KOINÒNIA: 1 CORINTHIANS 10:16

1.0 Introduction

Paul uses the term *koinōnia* in 1 Corinthians 10:16 with reference to the Christian common meal. He does so against a backdrop of pagan meals and eating food that has been sacrificed to deities in Graeco-Roman temples. The question of eating sacrificed food (*eidōlothyta*) is a critical one in terms of the context of the Corinthian community. Graeco-Roman social life, as we saw in chapter two, was integrated with religious practice. This was seen specifically in meal practices where each meal followed the same format and included besides the eating of food, drinking, song, prayer and libations. The social significance of the meal has become apparent and we have seen that the meal was an opportunity to demonstrate status and designate honour. For many the opportunity to participate in a meal came as a result of being a client and for others it was a means of furthering patronage.

The Corinthian community was divided, and, as we have seen, the divisions were most obvious when the community met for a common meal and when the question of joining in meals with outsiders arose. The purpose of this chapter is to investigate the causes of the divisions with reference to Paul's use of *koinōnia*. In looking at the problem, we will first note the conventional opinions on the causes of the divisions and then consider what an examination of the social history of the context of the community reveals about the situation.

The reference to *koinōnia* occurs within a unit of material spanning three chapters in Paul's first letter, that is, 8:1-11:1. What should be considered at the outset is the integrity of Paul's letter to the Corinthians, a subject that has generated a fair amount of debate over the years. The debate on the integrity of this unit has centred on the apparent dichotomy between the situations in which idol food is eaten as described in 8:1-13 and 10:23-11:1, and as described in 10:1-22. In the former situation Paul appears to accept, conditionally, the practice, whereas in the latter it appears that he rejects the practice. The intervening unit, 9:1-27, the so-called defence by Paul of his

apostleship is often thought to be a digression or an interpolation. We will not contribute to this debate, but rather opt for the integrity of the letter, as there is a strong contention for this position, and for our purposes it makes more sense to do so (see further Gooch 1993:50-2; Barrett 1982:40, 1968:17; Meeks 1983:100; Talbert 1989:XIX). Our assumption, therefore, will be that each part of the unit 8:1-11:1 is integral to an understanding of the whole unit, and that chapter 11 in which the discussion on the common meal occurs is likewise an integral part of the whole, the first letter to the Corinthians.

The question of why Paul uses *koinōnia* as he does in 10:16 is dependent on conclusions concerning the divisions in the Corinthian community that led him to use the term.[45] Whereas in investigations of the text in 1 Corinthians it is usual to treat the two issues, that is the common meal and eating sacrificed food, separately, we will combine them as we believe that they are linked. They are connected by virtue of the fact that Paul draws into his discussion on sacrificed food a reference to the common meal and in fact makes it the apex of his dialogue. Also, the social factors that we consider as important in accounting for the differences, will become clear as we appraise the two passages in tandem. We shall consider first the accepted views on the question of divisions over the eating of sacrificed food and in the common meal.

2.0 Traditional Views on Divisions in the Corinthian Community Over Eating Foods

We will begin with the eating of sacrificed food in chapters eight to ten, and then proceed to the common meal in chapter eleven of Paul's first letter to the Corinthians.

The issue of eating *eidōlothyta*, food sacrificed to an idol, had probably been mentioned previously by Paul to the Corinthians, who were reintroducing the matter.[46] Their

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[45] We have indicated that the reasons for the divisions in the community are generally presented as a breach between members. In the matter of eating sacrificed food some scholars suggest that the conflict arose because of different perspectives on the question between Jew and Gentile, whereas the problems in the common meal are generally attributed to the differences between the rich and the poor in the community.

[46] At the beginning of chapter eight Paul raises the issue of *eidōlothyta*, eating food sacrificed to idols. It has been generally assumed that Paul's discussion on *eidōlothyta* was in response to a query raised by the Corinthians themselves in a letter carried to him by perhaps Chloe's people (1:11) or possibly members of the household of Stephanus (16:17). Paul, as part of his rhetorical diatribe, is quoting

reason for raising the matter is not known, and is generally thought to be because of a schism within the community, that is, the Corinthians were divided over the issue of eating *eidōlothyta* and needed some further clarification from Paul, a view held by many scholars (see for instance Barrett 1968:194-5, Conzelmann 1975:14,147, Willis 1985:76-8, Theissen 1982:121, Meeks 1983:69).

The division over eating *eidōlothyta* is commonly expressed in terms of two opposing groups, the so-called "weak" and the so-called "strong". The term strong is not used *per se* by Paul, but rather inferred from what he says about the weak (8:7-13), who are purported by Paul to be "some" *(tines)* in the Corinthian community whose "conscience" or "consciousness" (*syneidesis*) is affected when they see others eating sacrificial food. The weak thus are Christians in Corinth whose experience convinces them of the reality of idols and *eidōlothyta*. The converse to the weak are those who would be unaffected by *eidōlothyta*, and they have thus been termed strong (cf Romans 15:1). The strong are those who claim to have knowledge *(gnosis* 8:1), which in their opinion gave them a certain "right", or power *(exousia* 8:9), to eat food sacrificed to idols. They defend their right to eat food sacrificed to idols and to attend meals at temples on the basis that idols are not real as there is only one God, and food is neutral and will not commend them to God (8:4). The strong are probably those who are addressed by Paul in his diatribe.

Conzelmann is content to leave the groups as strong or "simply weak" (1975:147, cf Willis 1985:93, Moffat 1959:112-13). Others are not satisfied just to agree on the presence of two groups, the strong and the weak, but question their identity, which they consider to be an ethnic issue, either Gentile or Jew. Their view is that the weak are Gentiles based on the fact that Paul states that the weak were "accustomed to idols" (*sounetheia ...tou eidolou hos eidōlothyton*, 8:7), that is, Gentile Christians who were not yet fully integrated into the convictions concerning monotheism and the reality of

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is quoting from such a letter. So that, for instance, when Paul says "all of us possess knowledge" (8:1), or "an idol has no real existence" (8:4), or "there is no God but one" (8:4), he is quoting back to the Corinthians what they have said to him. Paul himself says that the Corinthians wrote to him (7:1) and eidolothyta is probably one of the issues they raised, a point which is emphasised by his use of the phrase *peri de*, "now concerning..", at the beginning of the unit (cf 7:1, 25).

idols (see Talbert 1987:58, Barrett 1968:192-97, Murphy-O'Connor 1978:543-56). Jews would have investigated the source of the food which would have been unacceptable to them because it had been offered to idols. Furthermore, it would not have had the required tithe paid on it, and in the case of meat, would not have been slaughtered in accordance with Jewish law (see Barrett 1968:188).

A weakness with the Jew/ Gentile proposal that is often overlooked is that a confusion develops as to which group are being appealed to for the sake of "conscience". Gentiles often end up with a dual role as both weak and "gnostic", and therefore Gooch is right when he points out in his critique of Barrett:

> ...if Jews have the scruples, why should Paul appeal to possible harm to Gentiles? If the Gentile weak are the problem to which Paul appeals, how can Barrett maintain that the problem originates with Jewish Christians urging social withdrawal? (1993:146).

So although it appears that the situation could be explained in terms of a Jew/ Gentile rift, the theory does not always fit neatly into the text.

The traditional view on the problems within the common meal gathering of the Corinthian community, on the other hand, attributes the conflict to class distinctions, that is, differences between rich and poor (Barrett 1968:262-64, Moffat 1959:160-61, Hering 1962:113-114, Bornkamm 1969:126). The rich are regarded as those who contribute the provisions for the meal and also eat ahead of the poor, *tous me echontas* (those who do not have), and who arrive late to the meal (11:21). The results of these actions are both excesses on the part of the rich and deprivations for the poor. The members fail to participate in the *kyriakon deipnon* (the Lord's supper) which should be a corporate experience. Instead they have engaged in *idion deipnon* (their own supper 11:20-21).

Although on the surface the conclusion that the divisions were along class lines appears a straightforward one, in fact the way that the term class is used is not in keeping with it's use in the Graeco-Roman world. Rather, it is used by scholars in a more contemporary sense to differentiate between the members of the community in terms

of their wealth only. However, as we have already seen, the word class in first-century Corinth had a more specific meaning, and was locked into a particular social system. Although the reality is that there were both rich and poor in the Corinthian community, that fact does not offer the entire explanation as to why there were divisions during the common meal. The picture of what happened there is more complex than a division between rich and poor. The rich were so because of the social networking system that characterised urban social life. We need to examine an alternative analysis of the problems within the Christian common meal gathering that incorporates a reconstruction of the first-century urban social system. Similarly, insights that come from such an examination should also be applied to the issue of sacrificed food. Such an examination is dependent on insights that have come from a socio-historical analysis of the text. In our investigation of the two situations relating to food and meals we will begin with the common meal (11:17-33) and then proceed to look at the issue of eating sacrificed food (8-10).

3.0 A Socio-historical Reading of the Text

A socio-historical approach looks at the text in terms of the social context of the Corinthian community. With reference to the Christian common meal this approach was first broached by Gerd Theissen (1982), who based his work on that of Edward Judge (1960). Meeks (1983) follows closely on the heels of Theissen and we are dependent primarily on their insights and research in this area.

3.1 The Christian Common Meal

When Paul says that there are divisions *(schismata)* when the Corinthian community comes together *(synerchomenon)*, it is unlikely that he has the party divisions of the first chapter (1:11) in mind (see Meeks 1983:67, Barrett 1968:261). He is rather referring to two "groups" in the community, the ones who have and the ones who do not have *(tous me echontas* 11:22), the "have" and the "have-nots". We use the word group tentatively because we believe that there has been a question mark posed on the

existence of definitive groups in the Corinthian community.[47] The word "group" is used in our discussion here in the sense of "society" rather than two opposing factions which is often the impression created when the situation in the Corinthian community is described as opposing groups. Building on the research of Theissen, who found social reasons for the divisions in the Corinthian community, we suggest, therefore, that those "who do not have" would belong to a particular sector of society, and similarly those "who have" to another sector. The fact that Paul does not use the word poor (*ptochos*) suggests that he means more than economic deprivation. The two groups should be seen in terms of their status more than their wealth, as this would be more in keeping with the prevailing social norms of the time (see chapter two). The "haves", therefore, belong to a particular sector of society delineated by those who have status (but not necessarily class). Conversely, the "have-nots" belong to that sector in which status is denied them. In terms of our research in chapter two on the macro-society, those with status in the Corinthian community would be the householders like Gaius, Stephanus, Phoebe, Prisca and Aquilla, and Crispus and so on. Anyone in municipal office, such as the treasurer Erastus, would also fall into this category. They would fulfil the function of patrons. Those without any resource with which to compete for status, such as the majority of the slaves, would fall into the sector of those without status. They would form the clientele of the patrons. The majority of people in a city such as Corinth lived in one or two-roomed apartments with no cooking or ablution facilities, and therefore would probably be dependent on patronage for the basic necessity of a meal.

When the Corinthian community met together for the common meal, therefore, those with status would assume the role of patrons and provide the food for the occasion (see Theissen 1982:153, Meeks 1983:159). It is clear that there were members who had

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[47] Gooch is one who has questioned the existence of two groups in the matter of the eating of sacrificed food. Gooch has suggested, like Hurd (1965) before him, that Paul was not addressing two conflicting groups, the strong and the weak, but was presenting a hypothetical case in order to emphasise the dangers of sacrificed food (1993:72). Gooch suggests that the problem of "idol-food" is "Paul's problem", and only became an issue in the Corinthian community because Paul had advocated it to the community in a previous letter to avoid contact with idolatry. Gooch's theory cannot apply to the situation in the Christian common meal gathering because we believe that the existence of division is more than obvious, not only from what Paul says in the text, but also the general opinion of scholars as we have noted above. We will, however, return to Gooch's point when we discuss the eating of sacrificed food.

houses, a fact that has already been established, and is reinforced by Paul's question, *me gar oikias ouk echete eis to esthiein kai pinein;* (do you not have houses in which to eat and drink?). The discrepancies in the meal which resulted in some members eating their own meal *(idion deipnon)* can be explained by the fact that in common meal situations food was often distributed on the basis of status. We saw from our research on the social world of Corinth that the officials in collegia meals, and the social equals in elite gatherings, were offered superior food.

It is not impossible to conceive of the situation in the Corinthian community where one or more persons assuming the role of patrons would bring food for the whole gathering and would share the better quality food with their social equals, and give inferior quality food to the rest of the gathering.[48] In this way those of inferior status would be humiliated or in the words of Paul, *kataphroneite kai kataischynete tous mē echontas* (11:22). The ones who have nothing may feel ashamed as suggested by Barrett (1968:263). However, with Paul's social background in mind, the word *kataischynete* could be interpreted in terms of the concept of shame and honour. Paul's conviction about the Corinthian community is that their status is in Christ, into whom they are baptised - all are on the same level, with no distinction between Jew or Gentile, slave or free, rich or poor (cf Galatians 3:27-29). The proper context in which the members of the Corinthian community should be situated, is the community of love in which all members are honoured, first of all by God and then by each other (cf Malina & Neyrey 1991:32-34). Therefore, to exclude the have-nots from sharing equally in the meal, meant that they were deprived of an opportunity to receive honour, and were consequently shamed. Those with status and wealth who were accustomed to dining lavishly with their social equals, did not share their meal with those they considered of lower status, and therefore shamed them.

As Theissen says, the custom of distinguishing between foods on the basis of status,

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[48] Another interpretation held by, amongst others, Marshall (1980) and Talbert (1987), suggests that the meal could be similar to that described by Pliny, where each member brought their own meal which they then consumed without sharing with others at the table. The wealthy would have a sufficient quantity of food and could commence eating at their leisure, and in fact indulge themselves. Those of lower status would have less to bring and would probably, as labourers and artisans, arrive at the meal after work, to find the meal already under way (see Talbert 1987:74-75).

and thereby ascribing honour to those to whom it was thought due, would not be considered unusual in a city like Corinth because the custom was "widespread" (1982:156). Even though there were dissenting voices concerning this practice (see Chapter two # 4.3), it was generally accepted, because it was a way of confirming status and maintaining distance between patron and client[49] (Meeks 1983:68-69).

The fact that this was customary practice has led Theissen to suggest that the members of the Corinthian community were behaving according to the norms. They had what he has termed "class-specific expectations". Those with status would not consider what they were doing abnormal practice. The division in the context of the common meal is described therefore by Theissen as a conflict between the expectations held by the members and the "norms of a community of love" (1982:162).

The resolution to the problem of separate meals suggested by Paul is directed to the members with houses, the patrons, those who are hungry (*peina*) - they should eat at home (11:33). As Theissen points out, a compromise is reached:

> Within their own four walls they are to behave according to the norms of their social class, while at the Lord's Supper the norms of the congregation have absolute priority (1982:164).

Paul's concern is that the Corinthian community were treating the Christian meal like a typical common meal or banquet, where it was alright to differentiate in the food offered to participants and to have private meals. Paul's strategy, as pointed out by Barton, is to emphasise the difference between private and shared meals - in whichever house the shared meal was eaten it should be an inclusive meal (1986:225-30).

The question arises concerning who told Paul about the problems. Paul says he heard about the divisions within the community but does not reveal his source (11:17). It may be correct to say, as suggested by Theissen, that the position from which he speaks

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[49] Research by Theissen, and also by Chow, indicates that other situations in Corinth besides the Christian meal and eating sacrificed food could be attributed to patronage. For instance, it is possible that the litigants were patrons as they may have been property owners (1 Corinthians 6:1-11). It is possible they could be counted as amongst the "wise" in the Corinthian community (see Theissen 1982:97, Chow 1992;127-30). Similarly, the case of sexual immorality (1 Corinthians 5:1-13) could be explained in terms of patron-client ties - it could be an indication of an interaction between "marriage and wealth management", where it was expedient for the immoral man to establish a union with a wealthy woman (see Chow 1992:130-41).

is from "below", that is, those of inferior status are the ones who have presented the matter to Paul (1982:163). It is possible that Chloe's people brought to Paul's attention the excesses and segmentation during the common meal (1:11). He appears to address the issue to those who are the patrons. We may be able to conclude from this that those members of inferior status at least had an idea of the thrust of Paul's teaching on the purpose of the Christian common meal which presumably he gave in person when he spent some time in the community (cf Acts 18:11).

Paul apparently does place importance on the *kyriakon deipnon* for the community's life and continued existence. When Paul cites the *kyriakon deipnon* (the Lord's supper) as the reason for the Christians meeting together he focuses on one part only of the meal, the elements of bread and wine.[50] This does not mean necessarily that the bread and wine elements were a separate part of the meal, as is claimed by some (cf Neuenzeit in Theissen 1982:152-53). Theissen is most likely to be right when he states that there is a meal between the breaking and sharing of the bread and the drinking of the cup (1982:152). We have seen that general common meal formats included bread and wine which was shared and passed around as part of the meal. We must remember, too, the replication in the first century of the common meal format wherever it was eaten. There is no reason to suggest that the Christian community would break with that format. Smith rightly points out that the tradition quoted by Paul (11:23-25)

> ...provides significant information about the meal. It began with a consecration of bread to the Lord by means of the opening blessing. The bread ritual also marked the beginning of the deipnon proper, which of course is the term for the formal evening meal. It was after the deipnon...when the wine ceremony took place. A wine ceremony customarily ended the deipnon and began the symposium in Graeco-Roman formal meals. Here the customary wine ceremony has been adapted and reinterpreted according to the self-identity of the Christian community (1981:325).

Smith goes on to say that what Paul discusses in 1 Corinthians 12-14 could, in fact, form the symposium part of the Christian common meal. Paul states that when the Christians met together, each member could bring a contribution - a hymn, a lesson, a prayer, a tongue, an interpretation and so on:

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50 This tradition that Paul says he received from the Lord is now thought to be a pre-Pauline supper tradition (see Conzelmann 1975:192-203, but also cf Jeremias 1966).

> Indeed, the description of Christian worship in these chapters pictures an unstructured, undisciplined affair in which everyone is free to take part. This format is consistent with a symposium setting (1981:325).

It is likely, therefore, that the meal followed normal common meal practice. If we apply to this question the insight from anthropology referred to in chapter two, that customs are not easily changed, then we could reach the conclusion that the community followed the normal pattern of the meal. We saw that fixed routines especially in meals are not easily broken or changed. If this insight can be applied to the problem, then it could add weight to Theissen's suggestion that the conflict was based in the class-specific expectations of members, that is, the members were following the usual customs. The meals were so similar to what went on everywhere in Corinth that, as Witherington puts it:

> ...some Corinthian Christians could well have viewed the Christian assembly as some sort of association, perhaps even a cultic association, and might have behaved accordingly at Christian fellowship meals (1995:245).

The fact that the wine and bread ceremonies followed normal procedure in common meals, had possibly endorsed the beliefs of the members that it was an association or cultic meal.

Paul, however, has another meal in mind: for Paul the *kyriakon deipnon* had a particular significance for the community, a point he clearly wants to convey to the members. The tradition of the Christian meal, Paul says, he received from the Lord (*parelabon apo tou kyriou*), and delivered (*paredoka*)[51] to the Corinthian community

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[51] Conzelmann points out that the terms *paralambanein* and *paradidonai* were exact terms used in the Greek world in the context of formal learning, and also in the Jewish sphere in connection with the receiving and handing on of the Torah (1975:195-96).

(11:23).[52] Paul means that the origin[53] of the tradition goes back to Jesus.[54] The last meal of Jesus looks forward to the events of Jesus death and resurrection, and with that in mind, Jesus gives new meaning to the bread and cup shared amongst them. What he says includes the notion of his death as a sacrifice to establish a new covenant (11:25). The bread symbolises the body of Jesus "which is for you" (11:24), which is probably a reference to Isaiah 53:12 (Marshall 1980:89, Witherington 1995:250).[55] The bread was therefore used by Jesus to represent himself. Paul links the cup with covenant, that is, the covenant was instituted by the death of Jesus (11:25). As Witherington rightly points out, the cup was not a request to drink blood, something a Jew would abhor (1995:251). In the sense that the meal was for the participants, it meant that they received benefit from the death of Jesus. This is very much in line with a Hebrew view of sacrifice. As Marshall states: the worshippers share in the benefits of what was accomplished by Jesus in his sacrifice (1980:120, see also Ashby 1988:104, Barrett 1968:232, Witherington 1995:224-26).

The meal was in remembrance (*anamnesin*) of Jesus, which is a phrase peculiar to the Pauline institution saying, and not found in the synoptics. It could mean a reference to commemoration meals which were common in the collegia - it was typical of these meals to honour members who had died (see Meeks 1983:158). However, in the understanding of Paul the Christian meal was to commemorate not only the death of Jesus but to also celebrate his resurrection and anticipate his return (11:23-26, see

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52 It is not our brief to compare the two forms of the Lord's meal, the Matthew/ Mark version and the Paul/ Lukan one. Paul agrees with the Lukan one in all points except that Paul attaches the cup as well as the bread to the celebration of the death of Jesus until he returns. What is unique to the Paul/ Lukan version is the aspect of remembrance and the understanding that the body of Jesus was "given for" the participants (see Fee 1987:546).

53 This is confirmed by the use of *apo*.

54 The synoptic accounts suggest that the last meal that Jesus had with his disciples was a Passover meal. Although it is not certain that this was the case, as an evening meal it would probably have followed the same form as a Graeco-Roman common meal (see Smith 1980:178, Stein 1957:13-44).

55 It is likely that Jesus expected a martyr's death and therefore used the motif of the suffering servant (Isaiah 52:13-53:12), who gives himself on behalf of the people to take away their sin (see Marshall 1980:88-90).

Meeks 1983:159-60).[56] The focus of the meal was on a person who was alive and was present in the meal (Bornkamm 1969:145). In Hebrew thinking to remember meant not a reminder, but a renewing of a relationship, in this case the new covenant brought about through the death of Jesus (Ashby 1988:104). It was a meal to proclaim (*katangellete*) or declare the death and resurrection in, as Bornkamm states, an indicative rather than an imperative sense (1969:141). So it is used in the sense of: "in remembrance of me, or as you make remembrance of me, you declare or proclaim the Lord's death" - a declaration not only from member to member, but to God and to the outside world as well (see further Bornkamm 1969:139-142, Meeks 1983:157-59). Keck puts it succinctly:

> This remembrance is more than recollection; it has to do with commemoration, an act in which the meaning of the past is made present. It does not suggest that Christ's death is repeated ritually (1988:61).

So we can conclude that for Paul the Lord's meal was the primary event for the Christian community. It was an occasion of celebration when the community met to commemorate the death and resurrection of Jesus, and his covenant relationship with them. An important point suggested by Marshall is that the Jesus tradition of meals would have significance for the Pauline communities. We can mention in passing that the ministry of Jesus, as reflected in the gospels, demonstrated the realities of God's kingdom. The numerous healings are an example of this, but more important for our study, it is shown by the manner in which the outcasts, the poor, the rejected were welcomed by Jesus into meals shared with him and his followers (cf Mark 3:20). It was a table-fellowship that was a sign of acceptance and equality (see further Marshall 1980:95ff). If this table-fellowship was an important element in the Jesus tradition of meals, then the Corinthian community were way off mark in their meal practice.

Paul's solution to the problem within the Christian meal is directed to the householders, the patrons, because he says that the hungry should eat at home (11:33). More importantly, his direction is that they should wait for one another (*allēlous ekdechesthe*)

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[56] The Christian meal, as Meeks points out, is linked to baptism, the initiation entry rite to the community, in that it reconveys one of "the central motifs" of baptism, that is, death and resurrection (1983:158).

before they commence the meal. According to Witherington, this could also mean "to welcome one another" (1995:252). In terms of the social norms, the direction to eat together or welcome each other, is a radical one. A point of honour was that only social equals should eat together or relate on equal terms. If the house that the Corinthian community met in was, as suggested (chapter three), a large villa such as the one at Anaploga, then those with status would separate themselves into the triclinium, with the rest of the group probably pressed into the atrium. What Paul also had in mind, possibly, was a rearranging of seating arrangements to reduce the division.

Paul regards it is a serious matter, as is made clear by what he suggests are the consequences of participating in the meal in the way that they are - an unworthy (*anazios*) manner (11:27). Paul states that there is illness and death in the community because they have not really understood the purpose of the meal - they have not judged (*diakrinomen*) their behaviour before eating. It could be supposed that the food had some magical powers,[57] but it is more likely that it was not

> ...the food that made them ill, but the judgement that came on them for partaking in the Supper in an unworthy manner (Witherington 1995:252).

Those with status were not treating the rest of the Corinthian community as brothers (and sisters) in the one family headed up by God. By so doing they were making the purpose of the Christian meal, to remember Jesus and receive the benefits of his death which included entry into the family of God, null and void. The meal was the primary event in which allegiance to Jesus is acknowledged and his community made visible.

Paul sees such significance in the meal that he uses it to address the issue of eating *eidōlothyta*, eating sacrificed food.

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[57] Theissen, who finds support in Meeks, suggests that the elements have "a numinous quality" (1982:165, cf Meeks 1983:159, Gooch 1993:93). The bread and wine, says Theissen, must be "distinguished from other foods" (1982:165).

3.2 Eating *Eidōlothyta*

As we know Paul uses the term *koinōnia* against a background of *eidōlothyta*, eating food sacrificed to idols (8-10). There are several details concerning the issue that need to be looked at before we analyse the situation from a socio-historical point of view.

The word *syneidesis* means more "consciousness" than "conscience", which could be erroneously confused with the modern interpretation of the word. Consciousness has to do with an inner awareness that something is true (see Gooch 1993:78, Willis: 1985:92, Horsley 1978:581). It is possible that the word came from the Corinthians rather than from Paul. According to some scholars it is rooted in Hellenistic Judaism (see Horsley 1978:574-89, Davies 1972:675). However, the word probably came from the Graeco-Roman context (see Witherington 1995:198). It seems that the way that Gooch uses the word might be closer to what Paul means by it and the general meaning in the first-century (1993:77-78).[58] So we should use the word as meaning that the persons who had a weak *syneidesis* as regards sacrificed food had an awareness of the reality of such food, that it was indeed sacrificed to deities.

We have already mentioned that Gooch suggests that Paul was not addressing a divided community concerning that issue. For our purposes we do not want to enter a debate over that question, because from the general research on the Corinthian community it can be concluded that the community was certainly divided over the common meal practice (see Meeks 1983:159, Theissen 1982:147, Witherington 1995:241). The issue of eating sacrificed food has direct bearing on our focus for this study, and we believe that the situation that Paul addresses has a firm connection with the common meal issue. Some of the actions of the community over sacrificed food, we believe, can be closely aligned with the actions already discussed in the common meal question.

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[58] See particularly note 14 on page 78, where Gooch includes a discussion on the word and a register of those who have contributed to it.

In general scholarship, sacrificed food has always been regarded, or at least inferred, as meaning meat that is sacrificed to idols.[59] This has been critiqued by Gooch, who claims that food used in pagan worship included other foods, such as grains and fruit or vegetables, as well as meat (1993:54). This view is central to Gooch's thesis in that he uses it to aid him in his theory that the Corinthian community was not divided. As this critique by Gooch affects our discussion on sacrificed food which draws on Theissen's treatment of the issue, we want to address the question at the outset.

Gooch bases his argument on terms that Paul uses that suggest a general meaning for food. For example, he cites Paul's use of the word *broma* (8:13), a general term for food, and also the expression *brosis ton eidôlothyton* (8:4), eating food sacrificed to idols - on the basis that *brosis* refers to eating and is linked elsewhere with bread (2 Corinthians 9:10). He infers that the rhetorical sense in which Paul uses *broma* does not mean that necessarily Paul means meat even though Paul expressly says meat: "therefore if food (*broma)* is a cause of my brother's falling, I will never eat meat (*krea*), lest I cause my brother to fall" (8:13). Gooch has shown from his research that other foods besides meat were used in sacrifice (1993:1-46). However, this does not conclusively prove that what Paul had in mind was not just meat. As Gooch himself says regarding Paul's use of *krea* - it

> ...shows clearly that the idol-food Paul has in mind most readily is meat (1993:53).

Gooch's argument is thorough but not entirely convincing. There is no convincing evidence that Paul as a Jew did not regard sacrificed food as meat.[60] Scholars such as Theissen, whom Gooch suggests makes an unconscious assumption that the food referred to in 8-10 is meat, have made such an assumption because the issue in Paul's Jewish thinking, and probably experience, is to do with eating meat sacrificed to idols

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59 (see Gooch 1993:53 n 1 for examples).

60 There is also the possibility that Paul was aware of the Jerusalem decree which is phrased in a way that suggests that meat is intended by the word *eidôlothyta* - sacrificed food is linked with blood (*eidōlothyton kai haimatos*, Acts 15:29).

(see Gooch 1993:53 n 1).[61] Also, if it referred to food in general then all sacrificed food would be prohibited to the Corinthian community and that would leave very little else to eat, especially for the poor. So for our purposes we are not convinced by Gooch's argument and we will assume that when Paul uses *eidōlothyta* he means meat.

3.3 Paul's Primary Concerns About The Eating of *Eidōlothyta*

There are three situations described by Paul that relate to the eating of sacrificed food. Firstly, food could be eaten at the table in a pagan temple, *en eidōleio katakeimenon* - literally someone could be seen reclining in an idol's temple (8:10). Secondly, food could be bought at the market place, *en makelloi*,[62] and possibly eaten at home although Paul does not specifically say so (10:25). Thirdly, food could be eaten at the dinner party of an unbeliever (10:27-29).

Paul is addressing the so-called strong of the Corinthian community. They are those who appear to be unconcerned about eating sacrificed food and participating in public banquets. On the basis of the different foods available to people, Theissen contends that the strong are the socially powerful in Corinth, those who run households and thus have a role as patron (1982:129). Their status in Corinth demanded participation in social occasions. In order to protect their level of status they would have to fulfil social obligations in which they would have opportunities to bestow and receive honour.

Conversely, the weak were lower down the social scale and would be those without access to resources. They would have little opportunity to eat meat. They were both Gentile and Jew. Gentiles would not have occasion to eat meat and so they would always associate it with temple worship, because their only opportunity to eat meat would be during a public sacrificial feast. Jews would have no problem in avoiding sacrificed food (see further Theissen 1982:124-29). So we can find, as Theissen (and

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61 The Jewish concept of communion between worshipper and Yahweh by means of sacrifice, occurs only through slaughtered sacrifice (*zebah*), and not the burnt offering (see Eichrodt 1961:156). The importance of this point can be seen in Paul's argument when he refers to ancient Israelite sacrificial meals (1 Corinthians 10:18).

62 *Makellon* is a general term for market and does not mean specifically a meat market (see Gooch 1992:54, Barrett 1968:240).

Meeks) does, that the issue over sacrificed food can be explained in terms of the system of patron-client relations.

We can infer from Paul's argument that the primary issue highlighted by him was not *per se* the eating of food sacrificed to idols, but the question of the strong acting in a manner that was a hindrance to weak Christians. As patrons the strong claim the freedom to eat sacrificed food. They have already stated to Paul that their knowledge about the non-existence of idols and the neutrality of food endorses their case (8:1-6). Although he endorses the view of the strong concerning the neutrality of food and the non-existence of idols, Paul's concern is that their exercise of that freedom (literally: "authority" *exousia*) presents a "stumbling block" (*proskomma*) to the weak. The stress of the passage is that the weak person is someone for whom Christ died who would be "destroyed" (*apollutai*) by the actions of the strong, because he would follow suit and eat such food at the expense of his own "consciousness" (8:9-11). Paul equates the wrong done to a weak "brother" (*adelphos*) with doing wrong, or sinning, against Christ (8:12).

As pointed out by Witherington, Paul's stance on the matter of food had moved

> ...far from Judaism. He no longer believed that food commended one to God or offended God. He had come to the view that food was morally and religiously neutral (1995:199).

What concerned Paul more was the rift in unity that was created by the practice of the strong.

As patrons the strong would in turn be clients of those further up the social scale to whom they could owe a debt of honour. If that were the case then it may prove difficult to refuse an invitation without losing status and honour.[63] It is not difficult to imagine that patrons might offer meat at their meals with the expectation that their invited guests would eat what is served. Should a member of the Corinthian

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63 It may be too radical a description that Theissen suggests for the strong, that is, of noble birth (1982:138). That there were a few in that category has become clear, but by far the majority would be freedpersons who had risen up the ranks as far as they were able to go, and had established households for themselves.

community be invited to such a meal, he would not want to offend the patron by refusing to eat the meal or question where the meat had been purchased. The Christian might be observed by one of Paul's weak brothers, and this would cause the problem (8:10). A person such as Erastus would have an important role in Corinth and his career and status might be seriously impeded if he was no longer able to attend public banquets (Meeks 1983:69, Theissen 1982:128-32). The common meal as a vehicle for social advancement would be high on the list of patrons. The difficulty would arise not so much in attending them but in avoiding them (Gooch 1993:46, Chow 1992:142).

It is probable, as suggested by Chow, that the festivities linked to the imperial cult would have been particularly difficult to avoid (1992:152). The feasting would have involved the entire city, as meat would have been distributed to everyone. Abstinence would have been noticed. The feasts would have provided an opportunity for the socially powerful to express their allegiance to Rome, and it would have been a socially acceptable occasion to further patron-client connections. For someone like Erastus, participation in the imperial cult would have posed an added dilemma. According to Chow, an *aedilis* had the responsibility of organising the imperial feasts (1992:155). The task could also fall to a wealthy citizen. The cult of Demeter and Kore flourished in Corinth as we saw in chapter two, and so it is possible that invitations to feasts connected to the cult would have been numerous.

For those lower down the scale, a general distribution during special feasts, meant an opportunity to eat meat. Should the Christians be prohibited from eating sacrificed food, it would be a severe hardship for the poor, as their diet was simple and they rarely had the opportunity to eat protein foods like meat.

We could surmise that, if attendance at cultic feasts was for the socially and intellectually aware members of the Corinthian community difficult to avoid, then Paul's warning about idolatry was levelled at them. We can take, as Meeks does, that there are basically two problems in the issue of eating sacrificed food: one has to do with the eating of food itself, the other has to do with dining in a pagan temple; one has

to do with eating in such a manner that others are not affected, and the other is the issue of idolatry (1983:98-100, cf Talbert 1987:56, Keck 1988:88-90).

3.4 Paul's Solution

Paul deals with the eating of sacrificed food by setting criteria for relationships within the Corinthian community. Members are free to eat sacrificed food and purchase it from the market. They are free to accept invitations to the dinner parties of unbelievers, and in those instances should accept what is served unless it is pointed out to them by an unbeliever that the food has been sacrificed to an idol (*hierothyton* -a pagan term 10:28). In those instances their Christian witness is more important than the food. It is likely that, as Witherington suggests, the unbeliever will assume that Christians are from a Jewish sect, and will assume they should not eat such food (1995:227). Therefore the consciousness of the pagan will be affected if the Christian then eats the meat. So the strong should abstain from eating the meat.

Similarly, should a fellow Christian from the lower strata of society see one of the patrons in a temple dining room, and be affected adversely in terms of his consciousness about sacrificed foods, then the patron should abstain (8:9). Paul therefore states that members are to acknowledge each other as brothers and out of consideration for their weaker brother, the strong must be willing to abstain from eating sacrificed food. The patrons have authority or power to engage in social functions and Paul asks them to forego that freedom.[64]

Paul, himself, is willing to give up eating meat and become a vegetarian in order to avoid causing a fellow Christian to stumble (8:13). Paul has certain rights as an apostle, such as material support from the Christians amongst whom he works as an

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[64] Paul cites himself as an example of someone who has given up their freedom and rights (1 Corinthians 9). Space does not allow us to include a full discussion in this chapter (see Marshall 1987:292ff for a discussion on freedom).

apostle, but he gives up those rights.[65] Paul states that he relinquishes his rights to personal freedom and chooses instead to be a "slave to everyone" (*pasin emauton edoulosa*) (9:19). For instance, he says that he becomes weak to those who are weak, so as to "win the weak" (9:19-22). Paul is not referring to official slavery here but to a state of voluntary service to all. Paul is presenting himself as an example of someone who has broken free from the system of acquiring or competing for honour. He uses the language of slavery because it is the position of no status, a position which he says he has adopted. He has voluntarily adopted this position and he wants the Corinthian Christians to do likewise (11:1). This he says is the position that Jesus himself adopted (11:1, cf Philippians 2:7, John 13:4).

Paul gives further examples which he uses as a warning to the strong. He warns them that there are no guarantees of divine protection and reward. He likens himself to an athlete in a contest - entry into the contest does not guarantee a prize, but only training and discipline (9:24-27). Just so, "entry" into the chosen nation of Israel could not guarantee protection (10:1-13). Paul uses in his second example a reference to the incidence of Israel's worship of the golden calf (Exodus 32:18-29), an illustration of idolatry well known in Jewish tradition.[66]

4.0 The Question of Idolatry

The question of *eidōlothyta* is discussed in terms of worship in a pagan temple (10:19-21). The gist of Paul's discussion is that participation in such feasts had consequences for Christians and that joining in pagan feasts was not within the bounds of the professed freedom and knowledge of the members of the Christian community. It appeared that the Corinthians erroneously believed that baptism and the Lord's supper

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65 According to Marshall, "power" or "rights" (*exousia*), that is "freedoms", is used in Greek literature to mean freedom of choice or decision. Marshall suggests that Paul, in using the word *exousia*, intends to assert that, as an apostle, he had the right to certain actions if he so chose (1987:292).

66 Meeks identifies this second example as a "midrashic homily" which is dependent on Exodus 32:6. The eating and drinking metaphors in the verse are likened to eating and drinking spiritual food and drink from Christ himself. The crossing of the Red Sea is linked with baptism (1983:99).

would protect them at such occasions. Paul presents an argument to counter their belief.

Paul quotes examples from Israel's wandering in the desert as part of his argument. These examples point to the discontent and factiousness of Israel during the desert experience. At one point Israel abandons Yahweh worship in favour of Baal worship (Numbers 25:1-9). Part of this discontent has to do with food and it seems Paul has chosen this passage deliberately: the Israelites are tired of manna and demand meat (Numbers 11:4, 13). The reference to the Golden Calf is one directly to do with idolatry (Exodus 32:6). Witherington is probably correct when he says that Paul intends this to be taken as a warning against sexual immorality - there is good reason to suggest that "to play" is a reference to sexual immorality (1995:221-22).

An analogy can be drawn between the Red Sea crossing and the manna provision, and the Christian common meal, only in so far as they both point to spiritual blessing. The point that Paul is making when he refers to Israel's history, is that Israel experienced all the benefits of the covenant (Sinai) with Yahweh, just as the Christians experience all the benefits from Christ, but that did not prevent God's judgement from falling on Israel (10:1-5). The blessing of the covenant did not protect the Israelites when they fell into idolatry and immorality (10:6-8). Paul suggests this example acts as a warning to the strong who felt that they were able to cope with similar temptations (10:6). Paul is addressing the patrons who face continually the temptations involved in temple dining, and the point he is making is that their actions were becoming dangerously close to idolatry.

If food is neutral, at what point does eating it become idolatry, according to Paul, that is? The clue to the answer to this question lies in the Christian common meal, a reference to which Paul places at the crux of his discussion on idolatry (10:14ff). In this context the question of *eidōlothyta* is further addressed by Paul who uses the term *koinōnia* as the hinge around which his argument hangs.

In dealing with the question of joining in pagan feasts, Paul presents, firstly, the Christian meal and then the traditional Jewish feast as examples of meal participation. The procedure at some of the Jewish meals was for participants to eat parts of the sacrifice which, Paul states, makes them "partners in the altar (*koinōnoi tou thysiasteriou eisin*). The question is begging: what did this mean for the participants? A parallel to this can be found in Philo:

> He to whom sacrifice has been offered makes the group (*koinonon*) of worshippers partners in the altar and of one table (*SpecLeg* 1:221).

The Old Testament, however, avoids the notion of eating the deity in sacrificial feasts (Ashby 1988:104). There is a sense in which the worshipper identifies with what is offered in sacrifice (Wenham 1995:77), but primarily it is the "language" of communication between God and Israel - it is through sacrifice that relationship (covenant) is initiated (Ashby 1988:47). So the worshippers in Jewish meals become *koinōnoi* (10:18) because they are invited by God, the host of the meal, to share in the blessing and gifts at the table and enjoy fellowship with him (see Barrett 1968:235). The participants in the Jewish meals are partners together and share in the benefits of the meal (see further Ashby 1988:39-48, Wenham 1995:75-82, cf Deuteronomy 14:22-27). Witherington is thus right when he says

> ...sharing in the altar would mean sharing in the material and spiritual benefits of the sacrifice, just as in the Lord's Supper believers share in the material and spiritual benefits of Christ's sacrifice (1995:226).

Paul refers to the cup of thanksgiving as a *koinōnia* in the blood of Christ, and to the bread as a *koinōnia* in the body of Christ: *ouchi koinonia estin tou aimatos [somatos] tou Christou* (10:16).[67] The term *koinōnia* has many possible interpretations in this context. It has been variously translated in the different New Testament texts as "participation" (NIV, RSV) or "sharing" (TNT), or "communion" (AV). We have noted (chapter one) that scholars give various meanings to the word in the meal

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The cup of blessing or thanksgiving is a reference to the cup of wine at the end of a Jewish meal. To bless the cup in Jewish thought is the same as giving thanks to God for all his blessings, and does not suggest a transformation of the contents (see Marshall 1980:120). This latter view would be alien to Paul`s Jewish background, because, as Marshall suggests, it would be tantamount to "eating the deity" (1989:120). Marshall reckons that the notion of the cup being blessed rather than God "is one that dies hard and has been used to justify some kind of 'consecration' in modern liturgies whereby they become vehicles of divine blessing to those who receive them" (1989:120).

context. For instance, it could be that *koinōnia* means "common participation" (Barrett 1968:231), or fellowship and communion or companionship (see Hauck 1964:805). We noted in chapter one that Bauer gives the meaning of *koinōnia* as "signs of brotherly unity" (see above page 9). If a parallel is drawn between Jewish feasts (10:18) and the Christian meal (10:16), which Paul does, the conclusion reached from the one can be applied to the other. It then becomes obvious that *koinonia* in this context means to share in or participate in the blessings of the sacrifice of Jesus, as claimed by Witherington above. To eat the Christian meal, therefore, is *koinonia* with Christ.

However, it is more than that, a fact which can be established by Paul's repetition of the bread (10:17). Paul uses the loaf of bread as an analogy. He presents the loaf as symbolic of a unified community - one body, *hev soma*. He uses the word *metechomen* as a description of the community sharing together in the same meal. The semantic field of this word suggests that its use should focus on the meal, because the word was generally used in contexts relating to foods. The meaning given to it is to partake of or eat food (Louw & Nida 1989:249). In Greek use it also carried a sense of belonging to a particular religious group, a group whose identity is found in the ceremonial meal. Paul also uses an idiomatic expression, *trapezes metecho* (10:21), which means literally "to eat at the table of " (Louw & Nida 19:450).

The use by Paul of *metechomen* serves to clarify what he means by *koinōnia*. The fact that he links it with the bread suggests that it could be used interchangeably with *koinōnia*. We have seen (chapter one) that *koinōnia* is found in the general semantic area of association which includes words that relate to the eating of foods. Not only that, but it is linked with words that refer to close associations and companionship and to sharing. Paul has in mind a relationship of sharing together.

We can conclude that what Paul is saying, therefore, is that when the Corinthian community share in their common meal together they have *koinōnia* with Jesus and they have *koinōnia* with each other. Gooch expresses this notion succinctly:

> *Koinonia* in the Lord and *koinōnia* with other believers are for Paul one and the same: 10:16-17 intertwines associations among the body of the Lord in the bread and the body of the believers in the Lord (1993:57-58).

4.1 Allegiance Through Eating

Paul then comes to the crux of his argument. In a similar way to sharing in both Jewish and Christian meals, those who participate in pagan meals share together as partners with the deity/ies of the feast, described by Paul as "demons" (*daimonion*) (10:21). This is a reference by Paul to the supernatural spirit-world, the reality of which is endorsed by Paul in numerous instances in his letter (cf 1 Corinthians 4:9, 5:5, 8:5). Paul regards idols as having no existence, and the food sacrificed to idols as uncontaminated in any way, but that the sacrificial act involved worship of unseen evil powers, or demons.[68] Paul very much believes in the reality of *daimonia* (see Gooch 1993:57-58, Barrett 1982:191-92, Witherington 1995:197-98).[69] Paul claims in strong terms that the Christians cannot participate in pagan meals as well as in Christian meals (10:21). The inference is that those who do so will fall under the judgement of God (10:22). Paul is demanding strict allegiance by the Christians to "the Lord's table", that is the Christian meal and what it symbolises: allegiance to Christ and community with others. If members were to continue in the community what was necessary was a continued allegiance to Christ, a continued *koinōnia* with Christ. Sharing in cultic activities would result in a loss of *koinōnia* both with Christ and with other Christians. At the very crux of his argument Paul uses the word *koinōnia* and the question we have come to at last is, why does he do so?

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[68] According to Talbert the idea that joining in pagan worship constituted demon worship had both Jewish and early Christian origins. Talbert goes on to say that

> ..it is difficult to avoid seeing here a Pauline belief that the pagan cult meals forged some type of relationship between the human participants and the spiritual powers..(1989:59).

[69] That Paul regarded *diamonia* in the context of meals as a reality, points to the sacramental nature of meals in the first century. Even though collegia meals were formerly social occasions, they included a religious aspect by virtue of the fact that each meal honoured a deity. We have seen in chapter two that there was no divide in the Graeco-Roman world between the secular and religious sphere. Thus Gooch rightly critiques Willis (1985) who contends that meals were purely social and who underplays Paul's view of *diamonia* (see Gooch 1992:57ff).

5.0 Paul's Use of Koinōnia in 10:16

Our question is why does Paul use specifically the term *koinōnia*? Why does he not use *metecho*, a word which carries connotations of eating food in communal meals? Paul has a particular strategy in using *koinōnia*. We have seen that the Corinthian community was a divided community, divided, as the signs indicate, because of the prevailing system of patronage. Within the membership of the community were those who fulfilled the role of patrons by providing houses for the Christian gatherings and food for the common meal. They had certain social obligations within the macro-society of Corinth. The system of patronage demanded that they preserve their position of status by means of the attendance of numerous strategic occasions in which honour could be bestowed, acquired or challenged. Meals were a significant opportunity for displays of honour, and therefore it was in the interests of patrons to accept invitations to public and private meals. Some of these meals would be in temple precincts and would follow directly after ritual sacrifices to the deity, and others would be private dinner parties.

Also in the community were those whose access to resources was denied. Some of them belonged to households, having come into the community via their patrons, and they would be dependent on them economically and socially. The way to ensure economic survival for those low on the social scale was to become a client of someone further up the scale.

The division was therefore between those who were patrons and had access to goods, and those who were clients and had little or no access to goods. The status-specific expectations of both patrons and clients were setting the criteria for the community's life together, and it is this that Paul challenges. Paul has a difficult task, because he has to dismantle the system of patronage as he perceives it operating in the Corinthian community, and set up new criteria that concur with the gospel he preaches and that are in line with a community of love. Not only were there divisions in the community, but for Paul there were already signs of destruction. Disease and death Paul attributes to a wrong allegiance, that is, to a system, patronage, which prevented the members of

the community from acknowledging their allegiance to Jesus and their unity together. Paul uses the word *koinōnia* as a strategy to bring those with status into line with the expectations of the community of love that he preaches.

Paul uses *koinōnia* specifically, rather than other words such as *metecho*, because it has a particular understanding generated by the history of its use in the Graeco-Roman world. It conveys the ideas of partnership, equality, participation, friendship and sharing. The term has a history of use in the context of common meals. In the meal tradition, especially, *koinonia* carried a sense of equality, friendship and common sharing. *Metecho* does not have that history attached to its use. Although *metecho* is used with reference to eating meals, it has the specific use normally of referring to a particular type of food (cf Matthew 12:1, 1 Corinthians 9:7, Hebrews 5:13). However, as we have seen, Paul's use of *metecho* confirms his message that all share in the meal as part of the same community.

Paul addresses the problem of disunity in the Corinthian community. The patron-client networks are more important to the community than the Christian meal and the relationships amongst members. So when he uses the word *koinōnia*, he applies it to the meal in order to emphasise that the meal should be characterised by equality, friendship, partnership and mutual sharing. He holds *koinōnia* up as the ideal within the meal, knowing that the members will understand the traditional sense in which the word has been used in Greek meal contexts. He uses the word to present to the community an idea of what ethos should characterise their meals together.

That is not the only way in which he uses the word. The particular problem that Paul seems to highlight amongst the patrons was the frequency with which they probably attended banquets in pagan temples. This had the potential to further wreck the Corinthian community in terms of its unity and purpose. Paul has the social concerns of the community in mind as he addresses the question. Paul is coming extremely close to pagan thought in his argument, because he draws into the discussion a word that is loaded not only with social connotations, but also with sacramental overtones. In the Greek world *koinōnia* could also be used to describe a union with the divine. Paul

draws in the Christian meal to emphasise that there are two kinds of *koinōnia*: that with demons and that with God. He is risking the possibility that the Christians will use the Christian meal to endorse an occasion of eating with the deity, a possibility at odds both with his Jewish background and his new Christian identity. His purpose is to engender a shift to an allegiance to the Christian God, Jesus, an allegiance in which the Corinthian community becomes one body. In addition to that, Paul is concerned to promote the Christian meal as a social occasion in which Jesus Christ is honoured first, but that honour is also given to the members, especially to the weaker parts of the community, a concept which is foreign to Graeco-Roman practice of ascribing honour. As such Paul is giving unique nuances to his idea of what it means to have *koinōnia*, and in using *koinōnia* as he does, Paul challenges the basis of the social fabric of the Corinthian community.

CHAPTER FIVE CONCLUSION

1.0 Preamble

We began this dissertation with the presupposition that the meaning of the word *koinōnia* as used by Paul cannot be fully understood without an examination of its social context. This had become evident from the considerable research undertaken to discover the meaning of the word, which had resulted in three and at the most four categories for classifying *koinōnia*, but without consensus as to the exact meaning of the word. Paul's reference to *koinōnia* in the context of the Christian meal has been regarded as strategic in the quest for understanding what Paul meant when he used the word. This factor, plus the need to make the conclusions more manageable, has contributed to our choice of the reference in 1 Corinthians 10:16 as the focus of our study. Therefore our conclusions in this chapter pertain to Paul's use of *koinōnia* in the Christian meal.

2.0 Paul and *Koinōnia*

In its use in daily interactions on the human level in Classical Greek society, *koinōnia* became a notion which was acclaimed in literature as a social ideal. It carried a sense of equality and brotherhood that appealed especially to the vast majority of the population of the pre-industrial Graeco-Roman world, in which resources were limited and were mediated by a small majority. The notion of equality that marked *koinōnia* in that world found expression particularly in the common meal. The Greek ideal was that table companions could meet on an equal level and share together in mutual friendship, and forget for that moment any social distinctions. We have seen that to incorporate this ideal, resources for the meal were often selected on the basis of what was appropriate for the lowliest member.

Many were searching for what *koinōnia* represented: equality and a common sharing together. Associations or collegia sprang up everywhere in the Graeco-Roman world and became the forum for *koinōnia*, in competition to the state and the household, the

two institutions through which government of the empire was mediated. Collegia attracted primarily those who could not participate fully in both state and household. When people met together to eat a meal, that became the special place where it was hoped the ideal of *koinōnia* would be demonstrated. Common meals became the prominent social activity of the urban environment, both for the elite and the non-elite.

An important insight that has emerged from our examination of the social context of the Corinthian community, has concerned the central role of the common meal in the Graeco-Roman world. The fact that it was the principal social activity in the first century urban environment, was no less true for the Corinthian community. When the community met together it was for the common meal, which followed the general pattern of common meals in Corinth. We saw that common meals formed the basic event around which the household institution and collegia were organised, and in whatever sphere they occurred the meals followed the same format.

Examining the Corinthian community against its social milieu has given it a face, so to speak. Not only have we discovered that they were a social group amongst many in their urban environment, but we have ascertained the implications of that for the members of the Corinthian community. We have discovered that the members came from differing social levels within a system that was separated into two basic "societies": those who had and those who did not have, in terms of status and access to resources. The apex of the elite group in Corinth, following the general pattern in the empire, formed a small percentage of the population. They, together with those directly under them, the equestrians, decurions, and socially uplifted freedpersons, formed the socially powerful group in Corinth. They controlled the flow of resources through the system of patron-client relations that started with the emperor and was replicated throughout the empire. If a person was not a patron then s/he was a client or a potential client. The formation of a social group was dependent on patronage, as the only way into the mainstream of society was effected through benefaction, that is, someone in the role of patron offered resources such as house and food, in exchange for a sought-after commodity: tributes of honour.

The common meal was an integral part of the patron-client system. It was central to social interactions between patron and client, as it functioned as a vehicle for social advancement. We saw that who one ate with was a critical issue, as meals formed one of the contexts in which a person's status in the eyes of the community was confirmed. Patrons would accept invitations to meals only if there was the likelihood of reciprocity. Meals were opportunities to display status, bestow honour and foster patron-client ties. Attendance at the meals of social superiors was the primary way in which many people received benefaction, and also maintained a level of status. There was an expectation that food served would be received without question; a refusal to eat what was served was regarded as abnormal, and an insult or challenge to honour.

The discovery of the format and role of the common meal has had considerable impact on a study of the Corinthian community when they met for the Christian common meal. Several members have been identified as householders who opened their houses to the Corinthian community, often as a result of conversion and a pledge of allegiance to Jesus Christ. They can therefore be designated as patrons, whose role would have been benefactor to the Corinthian community. They would have provided resources for the community's common meal occasions, and would probably have assumed some leadership role in both parts of the meal, the deipnon and the symposium. Although Paul expectations of leadership was along the lines of equal participation, the evidence suggests that this was not happening in the Corinthian community.

The divisions in the Corinthian community can be directly attributed to the social system of patronage that undergirded life in Corinth, and which found its greatest expression in meals. The difference in meal traditions that Paul highlights can be attributed to the reliance of the socially powerful on the normal meal customs. It was normal to differentiate between guests according to status levels. It was to those with status that Paul directs his discussion and his resolutions for the problem. The patrons are those whose actions, although in keeping with social norms, had seriously eroded the purpose for the Christians to meet, that is, to remember Jesus. The quest for honour had become more important for those members, than the purpose of community, or the ideal of *koinōnia*. In Paul's opinion, they had little understanding

of the significance of the Christian meal, demonstrated not only by their practice of individual meals, but also by the frequency with which they were probably participating in pagan temple festivities. It would not have been an easy decision for the patrons in the Corinthian community to forego attending meals in which their position of status would be upheld or augmented, as this was an expected norm and a medium in which livelihood and status was maintained and extended. The claim of the socially powerful was that this was their right and freedom. An examination of the social world of Paul enables us to understand the full import of what giving up rights and freedoms could be for a Christian in that world. Reciprocal ties demanded certain actions and behaviours of people. In order to share in resources people had to link themselves as clients to those who could supply those resources, that is, patrons. An endorsement of Christian freedom and giving up rights could, for a Corinthian Christian, mean a surrendering of social status and possibly livelihood.

Paul brings in the idea of *koinōnia* to address the divisions in the community. It is not a word from Paul's Jewish background, as it conveys not only a social meaning but also a sacramental one, which is foreign to Judaism. It is a Classical Greek term and in using it in 1 Corinthians 10:16, Paul has a particular strategy in mind. The word *koinōnia* in Greek use already contained the sense of equality and partnership within a meal context. Paul is creating the idea of equality when he uses *koinōnia* in 10:16, as it already represents a meal of equals, a meal of brotherhood and sisterhood, where those who share the meal are partners. He reinforces this idea by drawing in the symbolism of one bread, using the word *metecho*, and establishes a seemingly interchangeable link between *koinōnia* and one body. He can therefore make the assertion that there is one body, one community, because of the one meal.

What Paul is aiming for is the survival of the community. He is concerned with the maintenance of unity, which in terms of Paul's theology, is a given. Their allegiance to Jesus meant that they were one body, one association. What Paul was concerned about was the the expression of that unity in the context of eating food and meals. Paul identified signs of disintegration and destruction in the community, a direct result of the divisions, and he uses *koinōnia* to ride over the divisions in the community. He

brings in a sacramental sense of the word as well as the social sense, because the socially powerful in the community were engaging in a syncretistic Christianity. As a Jew, Paul would not readily turn to a sacramental interpretation. However, Paul is forced to draw on the wider use of *koinōnia* because of the threats to the community from this syncretism. In stating that an allegiance is formed through eating a meal, Paul is using shock tactics to promote equality and unity. The consequence of joining in pagan festivities is an alliance with *daimonia*, which, if persisted, posed a further threat to the community. Paul comes extremely close to Greek pagan thought in this attempt and moves away from his own background of Judaism. It is a risky path which he is prepared to take for the sake of the continued existence of the community.

In using the word as he does, Paul not only presents it as a term that would be understood by the Corinthian community, but by linking it as he does with the Christian meal, he adds his own nuances. The Christian meal was a social occasion in which Jesus Christ was honoured, and as such it was the most significant occasion within the Corinthian community for a demonstration of Paul's *koinōnia* ideology. By linking *koinōnia* with the Christian meal, Paul centres it on sharing in the benefits of the death and resurrection of Jesus. For Paul the meal was one in which the covenant relationship between Jesus and the participants is remembered as a covenant in which no other allegiance is possible. Therefore Paul's Christology is critical to his understanding of *koinōnia*. Christian *koinōnia* centres the partnership of equality around unity with Jesus, which through the Spirit extends to equality and unity amongst his followers. In the meal, *koinōnia* with Jesus is experienced, and between members, and Christians become sharers together of the benefits of the covenant. In Paul's understanding, members have equal status through Jesus, and each member is significant and has a particular function in the community. Relationships are to be characterised by *agape*, Christian love, an expression of which can be seen in the way in which the Christian meal is eaten. It is in the meal that the egalitarian nature of the Christian community should be seen, and social differences put aside in favour of equal sharing. It is by gathering together as equals in such meals that the Christians are able to share in what the Spirit promotes, that is, *agape*, common attitudes, common goals, and a common freedom.

The notion of freedom is a significant component of Paul's *koinōnia*, and surely must be one of the benefits of the Jesus covenant. An exercise of freedom in Paul's way would ensure *koinōnia*. Freedom as a benefit allowed Paul to opt out of the patron-client system that threatened to wreck the relationships in the Corinthian community. He was free to forego his rights or freedoms as an apostle for the sake of the members of the Christian community, and clearly he expected the Corinthian community to do the same. He thus attaches servanthood to his notion of *koinōnia*: there should be no expectation of making clients through gift-giving, and members should give up rights and honour for the benefit of fellow members.

Paul also includes the idea of suffering in the partnership that the Christians have with Jesus and each other. The suffering experienced by Christians in the Pauline communities elsewhere, suffering that was a direct consequence of an allegiance to Jesus, could well come to be experienced by the Christians in Corinth, if they surrendered their connections to patrons and clients. The refusal to participate in meal occasions, or to eat food at dinner parties, would be regarded as abnormal and possibly an action to be ridiculed. These values that he attaches to *koinōnia* are not values that would be subscribed to by people in the society that we are given Corinth to be, one tied into making clients and honouring patrons. Therefore, these distinctive aspects of *koinōnia* are essentially Pauline and arise specifically out of his Christian faith. They indicate the kind of *koinōnia* Paul saw as central to the life of the Christian community and should be found especially when the Christians met together for a common meal.

If members of the Corinthian community had implemented Paul's idea of community, then the community might have become a distinctive social group, because by executing his ideas they would have turned the system of hounour pursiuts upside down. They would have adopted instead what would have been regarded as a servile position, a position that gave honour to those who should not normally be given it. Later evidence indicates that the Christian communities increased in magnitude, so that Christianity could be said to have developed into a counter-culture movement attracting both suspicion and persecution, but in the end becoming the status quo in society. However, in first-century Corinth the evidence indicates that Paul's idea of community was not

the reality. The community there was beset by problems, and the problems were the reason for Paul's letters to the community and ultimately the reason why he used the term *koinônia*.

In short, the Christian meal formed the apex of Paul's understanding and use of *koinônia*. It was the important occasion for equality to be demonstrated amongst the Christians. They were, however, bringing into the meal the values and customs found in the city. Paul was concerned that the social inequalities evident in the participants would break down the equality of what should be their Christian partnership. Therefore he presents *koinōnia* as the solvent. He invests it with his own particular meaning and uses it to respond to the threat of exclusivism posed by the patron-client system operating in the city. Paul's *koinōnia* ideology conflicts with the patron-client ideology. He therefore presents Jesus as the patron of the Christians in Corinth, who gather around him as clients, on an equal basis, and receive equally from him the benefactions of his death and resurrection.

3.0 Finale

Paul's *koinōnia* ideology is significant for the current situation in South Africa. For the Christians it serves as a reminder that they are partners together in worshipping and serving Jesus. In order to make a difference in their wider community, it is imperative for Christians to endorse their equality and welcome believers of all races and social status into their gatherings. By embracing fully their partnership together in Christ and making this the motivating factor of their lives, they can stand against the prevailing norms that erode Christian *koinōnia*. By the *agapè* of Christians shall it become evident that *koinōnia* is taking place.

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