



Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to investigate the community meals as an identity shaping process in Paul's *ekklēsiai*. The research question is as follows:

In which ways do meals form an identity, community, and equality in Paul's *ekklēsia* at Corinth and Galatia, in the light of the Greco-Roman banquet tradition and the Apostolic Decree? I answer this question by focus on meals as a banquet, and meals as an occasion for creating a social bonding, an identity, and an equality.

By using the social-scientific criticism, social identity theory, and Paul within Judaism perspective, I come to conclusion that equality, community, purity, inclusivity, diversity, self-control, moderation, and monotheism characterize an identity of Jesus-believers.

Banquets form equality and community by the ceremonial cup, the blessing, and the act of sharing food, wine, and conversation, and by contribute to the worship. Furthermore, an act of eating together form diversity and inclusivity.

Banquets form an identity as a Jesus-believer through an adoption to Jewish purity values and a reproduction of a Jewish identity by keeping the Apostolic Decree, which is based on Lev 17–18. Moreover, this obligation can be seen as a covenant nomism for Jesus-believing non-Jews, where non-Jews are justified by Christ and washed by baptism, and keeping the decree guarantees a holy status of *ekklēsia*.

Furthermore, I have found that banquets and meals in Paul's *ekklēsiai* can be associated with sexual immorality, in the light of Greco-Roman banquets.

Keywords: The social-scientific criticism, social identity theory, Paul within Judaism, meals, banquets, the Apostolic Decree, purity, Corinth, Galatia.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background

“When you come together to eat...” is the title of this thesis, and nowadays, a possible continuation of this quote from 1 Corinthians could be: “do not forget to wash your hands”. In fact, an act of handwashing was a fixed moment of the Greco-Roman banquet and the Jewish banquet. But this is not the reason I became interested in meals. The idea about meals’ significance was born when I was reflecting about the relation and connection between the sharing of bread and wine under Communion and the daily sharing of meals. I could see some similarities between the Last Supper and other meals in the Gospels, for instance, community, abundance, sharing, and blessing. Finally, my focus landed on Paul’s letters and the Greco-Roman banquet tradition. In this thesis, I am interested in meals’ significance and their practical dimension, on which way meals affect individuals. This interest on meals is based on a conviction that eating it is not the same as dining. Dining is more than stilling a hunger, dining includes relationships, cooperation, and adaption. And now, under the coronavirus pandemic, a social dimension of dining has disappeared, and transformed to an act of eating in solitude. The pandemic made me focus on community and unity. Even though the social location of Paul differs from mine, I can relate more or less to Pauline anxiety. Paul lived in a time, where minorities were oppressed by the Romans, and he was convinced that the end of the present age was at hand. Nowadays, the questions concerning unity, community, and social interaction, can be relevant again, when these values cannot be taken for granted.

1.2 Problem, Aim, and Research Question

I have noticed that most scholars who investigate meals in Paul’s *ekklēsiai*, focus on a division, meals as an occasion of disagreement or break-up. This division is based on a fact, that the Jesus-movement consisted of Jesus-believing Jews and Jesus-believing non-Jews. By the term “Jesus-believing Jew” I mean a Jewish person by birth or conversion, who, in the case of men, are circumcised, observe the Torah, and in one way or another believed that Jesus was the messiah of Israel. By the term “Jesus-believing non-Jew” I mean individuals who are not Jewish by birth nor by conversion.

I think that the focus on tensions between Jesus-believing Jews and Jesus-believing non-Jews during meals is based on scholars' position, which says that Paul left Judaism. For instance, according to Ed Parish Sanders, Paul left Judaism and created a new group, a "third race", consisting of Jews and non-Jews, united with Christ.¹ This view might suggest that meals and identity formed by meals, in Paul's *ekklēsiai*, were free from Jewish features, and Paul formed a new meal tradition, which is not my position. My position is that Paul did not leave Judaism, and Paul within Judaism as a perspective, can be helpful to understand meals, because Paul did not create something new from nothing, but he reinterpreted already existing ideology, values, norms, and customs from the Greco-Roman world including Judaism.² Furthermore, "the peoples of the Mediterranean world of the period circa 300 B.C.E to circa 300 C.E. tended to share the same dining customs".³ Jews, Romans, Greeks, and Egyptians shared the same dining customs. This means that a meal could be a great occasion of uniting Jesus-believing Jews and Jesus-believing non-Jews, because diners had some traditions in common.

When other scholars focus on division, I will focus on the table-fellowship as an occasion of building up *ekklēsia* and unite Jesus-believers.

The aim of this thesis is to investigate the community meals as an identity shaping process in Paul's *ekklēsiai*.

My starting point is that identity is automatically connected with community and equality through meals. Through investigating the community meals as an identity shaping process, I can get information about equality and community. The community meals presuppose that diners eat together, and meals can be an occasion for creating social bonds and forming fellowship, community. Because meals give expression to values, beliefs and customs, they form and mirror group identities. Equality at a table is about sharing of foods, wine, and conversations. Sharing equally and with full participation can mirror equality among members of a group, and mirror group identities. Sharing can give a feeling of belonging to a group. Both equality and community are important for me, because these values focus on unity.

¹ Ed Parish Sanders, *Paul, the Law and the Jewish People* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 173.

² Dennis Edwin Smith, *From Symposium to Eucharist: The Banquet in the Early Christian World* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 174–175.

³ Smith, *From Symposium to Eucharist*, 14.

Furthermore, because my starting point is that Paul did not leave Judaism, Jewish laws are also important for this thesis, therefore meals will be investigated in the light of the Apostolic Decree. The Apostolic Decree refers to a statement established under the apostolic meeting in Jerusalem, described in Acts 15. The decree lists the obligation addressed to Jesus-believing non-Jews, which are obligated to waive food offered to idols, strangled meat, blood, and fornication. These obligations are based on Jewish laws in Lev 17–18, and govern the daily interaction between Jews and non-Jews.⁴ The daily interaction includes of course meals.

The research question is as follows:

In which ways do meals form an identity, community, and equality in Paul's *ekklēsia* at Corinth and Galatia, in the light of the Greco-Roman banquet tradition and the Apostolic Decree?

This question will be answered through the focus on:

-Meals as a banquet.

-Meals as an occasion for creating social bonds, identities, and equality.

1.3 Methodology

1.3.1 Social-Scientific Criticism

In this thesis, social- scientific criticism is used to examine what happens behind the text and understand the cultural values, and norms of antiquity by a text analysis.⁵ Social-scientific criticism is an exegetical method described by John Elliot as follows:

Social scientific criticism of the Bible is that phase of the exegetical task which analyzes the social and cultural dimensions of the text and of its environmental context through the utilization of the perspectives, theory, models, and research of the social science. As a component of the historical-critical method of exegesis, social scientific criticism investigates biblical texts as

⁴ Isaac W. Oliver. *Torah Praxis After 70 CE: Reading Matthew and Luke-Acts as Jewish Texts*, WUNT 355 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 370.

⁵ W. Randolph Tate, *Biblical Interpretation: An Integrated Approach* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 78.

meaningful configuration of language intended to communicate between composers and audience.⁶

Because environment shapes attitudes, expectations, values, and norms, then social-scientific criticism provides a more profound understanding of texts.⁷ In this thesis I will understand what happens behind the First Epistle to the Corinthians and the Epistle to the Galatians, to understand the community meals as an identity shaping process in Paul's *ekklēsia*. I use some chosen texts from antiquity because they can reveal social and cultural values, beliefs, patterns, and codes in Mediterranean cultures. I am interested in topics such as meals, table-fellowship, purity, and honor. Meals and table-fellowship are categorized by me as a banquet, and together with other definitions are explained below just like the discussion concerning text sources and strategy.

Challenges and opportunities with the method:

The challenge and opportunity with the method is that a researcher's social or political location can have impact on research questions.⁸ It means that some questions may become more or less interesting, and our history and trends may affect our reading of texts. New questions to texts may arise, which is an opportunity. Another challenge with the method is that a modern interpreter does not have the same knowledge about the social location as the author or the original audience, and it is an impossible task to ask them about the sociocultural location.⁹ However, the social-scientific criticism can act as the bridge between past and present by providing methods that can explain in some way, but not completely, what a text meant in its original historical and social contexts.¹⁰ Another aspect, that is important to consider is the legitimacy of ancient sources and how information about banquets should be regarded. Texts about banquets express relationships as they exist and as

⁶ Elliot, John Hall. *What Is Social-Scientific Criticism?* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 7, 145.

⁷ Tate, *Biblical Interpretation*, 79.

⁸ Mats Börjesson, *Diskurser och konstruktioner: en sorts metodbok* (Lund: Studentlitteratur, 2003), 42.

⁹ Tate, *Biblical Interpretation*, 79.

¹⁰ Tate, *Biblical Interpretation*, 80.

participants wish them to be, which means that banquet descriptions do not necessarily reflect existing social realities.¹¹

1.3.2 Sources and Strategy

In this thesis three kinds of sources are used: Greco-Roman texts from antiquity, a rabbinic literature, Paul's letters to the Corinthians and the Galatians, and Acts 15. Greco-Roman texts and a rabbinic literature will be read and analyzed with the help of Dennis Smith's book *From Symposium to Eucharist: The Banquet in the Early Christian World*. Because I use Smith's analysis of meals in Greco-Roman texts and a rabbinic literature, I will omit extensive descriptions of Greco-Romans and Rabbinic meals, and my primary focus is put on Paul's letters. I use the First Epistle to Corinthians and the Epistle to Galatians as my primary sources and objects of this study. My focus is on pericopes describing meals as banquets. The definition of banquet is presented below:

Banquet

Nowadays, when we think about a banquet, we can get associations with a luxurious formal meal, which demands an invitation. Maybe we get associations to the Nobel Banquet, important guests, royalty, gourmet food, table talk but also dress codes, table ethics and social codes. Antique banquets could include royal banquets but also could have included sacrificial meals or Eucharist.¹² Some scholars use "the *symposion* as if it were indeed an exclusive preserve of aristocratic behavior, a right that belonged to and defined a clearly differentiated social class."¹³ But Oswyn Murray does not agree with this statement and argues, that "the *symposion* was essentially a form of pleasure, not of social control, and sympotic attitudes cannot be translated into rigid hierarchies."¹⁴

¹¹ Katheryn C. Twiss, *The Archeology of Food: Identity, Politics, and Ideology in the Prehistoric and Historic Past* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 99.

¹² Smith, *From Symposium to Eucharist*, 3.

¹³ Murray, Cazzato, and Gabriel, *The Symposium*, 142.

¹⁴ Murray, Cazzato, and Gabriel, *The Symposium*, 142.

In this thesis, I use the concept of the banquet in a broad sense, based on Dennis E Smith’s model,¹⁵ presented below:

COMMON BANQUET TRADITION		
Adapted to various settings		
Everyday meals	Symposia	Christian Agape
Mystery meals	Sacrificial meals	Christian Eucharist
Everyday Jewish meals	Jewish festival meals	Funerary banquets

This model means that the usages of meals come from the same common tradition, which is the tradition of the banquet. The banquet tradition refers to customs and ideology. Banquet customs infer ways in which ancient people conducted at their formal meals. Banquet ideology infers values and how the values were communicated.¹⁶ I define the banquet as an evening, formal meal and also as a social institution. The antique banquet as a social institution has a history and also conducts peoples’ behaviors, defines what is right or not and draw boundaries. Community meals are controlled by values and norms prevalent in the ancient society. I will claim that even individuals can form the social institutions, like Paul who challenges socially given classifications.

In order to find pericopes dealing with banquets in Pauline letters, I pay attention to pericopes where the acts of eating together as a community is mentioned by such verbs as eat (φάγω), or come together (συνέρχομαι). My focus also is on the topics concerning purity, honor/social stratification, and equality in the pericopes dealing with banquets, but I am also interested in the relationships between Jesus-believing Jews, and Jesus-believing non-Jews during banquets. Definitions of honor/social stratification, social equality and purity are presented below:

Honor/social stratification

Honor in the first-century Mediterranean context, according to Robbins, refers to a (almost always a male) person’s rightful place in society. Honor can be associated with power, sexual status, and position in a society. Honor is about the social acknowledgment of worth. “The

¹⁵ Smith, *From Symposium to Eucharist*, 3.

¹⁶ Smith, *From Symposium to Eucharist*, 3.

purpose of honor is to serve as a social rating that entitles a person to interact in specific ways with his or her equals, superiors, and subordinates, according to the prescribed cultural cues of the society.”¹⁷

Social equality

Social equality is a term used by Smith, referring to both social bonding and social stratification. It means that all diners were equal, all could share equally and with full participation, but some diners were more equal than others.¹⁸ This means that diners were treated according to their social status and honor codes. In other words, social equality in the ancient world does not mean the same as equality today.

Purity codes

Purity codes are about boundaries separating the inside from the outside, which can lead to situations, where those who overturn boundaries because of their impurity, do not fit the space, and cause confusion in the arrangement.¹⁹ The proximity to the Jerusalem temple was crucial in the purity-classification, at the time of Jesus because the temple was “the holy of holies”. At the top were priest, Levites, and full-blooded Israelites. In the middle were illegal children of priests, proselytes or Gentile converts to Judaism, proselytes who once were slaves. Further down were bastards, born of prostitutes, foundlings, eunuchs [castrated men] made so by men. Even further down were eunuchs born that way, those with deformed sexual features, and Hermaphrodites. On the bottom were Gentiles.²⁰

Paul’s letters and Acts 15

While the texts from antiquity and the rabbinic texts are my tools to understand the customs behind the Pauline letters. I treat these sources describing banquets, as a bearer of knowledge

¹⁷ Vernon K. Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts: A Guide to Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation* (Valley Forge: Trinity Press International, 1996), 76.

¹⁸ Smith, *From Symposium to Eucharist*, 11.

¹⁹ Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts*, 85.

²⁰ Bruce J. Malina, *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1993), 159–160.

about customs. Texts from antiquity are used to try to understand the situation behind the Pauline letters. Texts from antiquity are very helpful because “the peoples of the Mediterranean world of the period circa 300 B.C.E to circa 300 C.E. tended to share the same dining customs”.²¹ It means that Jews, Romans, Greeks, and Egyptians shared the same dining customs. Selected ancient texts are my glasses, through which I interpret Pauline letters. This is connected with my understanding of the banquet. Because banquettes give expression to values, beliefs and customs, I will pay attention during the text analysis, to sociocultural codes such as honor, equality, and purity in the context of the banquet. These categories are not always expressed explicitly by the texts, but often implicitly, through a situation context. And my role as an interpreter is to locate these codes and apply them to meals as an identity shaping process.

First, selected passages in Pauline letters to the Galatians, and to First Corinthians are used. I chose these two Pauline letters because they supply information and refers to a banquet. However, they do not mention a banquet explicit. Descriptions of a banquet are more extensive in First Corinthians than in the Galatians, but this does not make the Galatian less important. The Galatian plays a huge role because this letter refers to the incident at Antioch, which suggests that even Galatians had problems of the same nature at the table between Jesus-believing Jews, and Jesus-believing non-Jews.

The incident at Antioch described in Gal 2:11–18 is about Peter, one of the Jewish adherents to Jesus-believers associated with the congregation in Jerusalem, who used to eat with the Gentiles. But, when some people from James arrived, the Jerusalem visitors, he drew back and stayed away because he was afraid of those who kept the circumcision. This behavior was not liked by Paul, and he rebuked Peter, because of his hypocrisy. This story is important for me, because it works as the background for understanding the Apostolic Decree in Acts 15. Acts as a source is ascribed to Luke, and was written around 80–85 CE.²² Furthermore, the decree is the background for understanding meals in Corinth and Galatia, and I read the decree with help of Isaac W Oliver’ book *Torah Praxis After 70 CE*, which associates the decree with Jewish laws.

²¹ Smith, *From Symposium to Eucharist*, 14.

²² Bart D. Ehrman, *A Brief Introduction to the New Testament* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 182.

First Corinthians as a source was written by Paul from Ephesus²³ and is probably dated to 54–55 CE.²⁴ Corinth became a Roman colony in 44 BCE and archeological findings indicate that the city was the place of a wide range of religious movements, where the Jews were a minority.²⁵ The main themes in this letter are problems in Corinth, involving disunity in the *ekklēsia*, immorality, difficulties, and tensions during worship services.²⁶

The letter to the Galatians is written to a group of communities in the Roman province of Galatia, in Asia Minor by Paul, and is probably dating to 54–56 CE.²⁷ The main theme in this letter is that other missionaries are proclaiming a different version of the gospel, and they insist that non-Jewish males have to become circumcised and keep Jewish Law to be fully right with God, while Paul argues that salvation to non-Jews comes through Christ alone, not by keeping the Jewish Law.²⁸ According to Smith, meals at Antioch and Corinth represent the same basic meal tradition.²⁹ What Paul calls “the Lord’s supper” at Corinth (1 Cor 11:20) is also what was being practiced at Antioch (Gal 2:11–12).³⁰ He assumes that the similar meal practices would have been common at other Pauline communities, for instance in Galatia.³¹ And this is my position too.

Antique sources

As antique sources, I use some quotes from *The Learned Banqueters* of Athenaeus of Naucratis. The text is dated to 223 CE,³² and this work is an encyclopedia of quotations,³³ which describes the learned banquets. Athenaeus was interested in discovering past practices through antiquarian research which help to reveal realities which make him a useful witness.³⁴ I will also use some quotations from *Moralia at the Table* by Plutarch. Plutarch

²³ James D. G. Dunn, *1 Corinthians* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1995), 18.

²⁴ Dunn, *1 Corinthians*, 15.

²⁵ Dunn, *1 Corinthians*, 15–7.

²⁶ Ehrman, *A Brief Introduction to the New Testament*, 230.

²⁷ Dieter Mitternacht and Anders Runesson, *Jesus och de första kristna: inledning till Nya testamentet*. (Stockholm: Verbum, 2007), 249–250.

²⁸ Ehrman, *A Brief Introduction to the New Testament*, 245.

²⁹ Smith, *From Symposium to Eucharist*, 174.

³⁰ Philip Francis Esler, *The First Christians in Their Social Worlds: Social Scientific Approaches to New Testament Interpretation* (London: Routledge, 1994), 52–53.

³¹ Smith, *From Symposium to Eucharist*, 174.

³² Oswyn Murray, Vanessa Cazzato and Michael Gabriel, *The Symposium: Drinking Greek Style. Essays on Greek Pleasure, 1983-2017* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 348.

³³ Murray, Cazzato, and Gabriel, *The Symposium*, 342.

³⁴ Murray, Cazzato, and Gabriel, *The Symposium*, 364.

(46–119 CE) was a Greek biographer and his *Moralia* consist of many essays on ethical, religious, physical, political, and literary topics. These essays are a collection of set speeches to informal conversation among members of Plutarch's family circle.³⁵ These sources contribute with knowledge about banquet's form and rules of conduct.

The next kind of source is the rabbinic literature: Tosefta and Mishnah. Tosefta is a collection of oral traditions supplementing the Mishnah (oral law). Both Tosefta and Mishnah represent the work of Jewish scholars called *tannaim*, who compiled these sources around the second century CE.³⁶

Tosefta and Mishnah supply information about the order of the meal (banquet) and some rules of conduct at a banquet. I am aware that these Jewish texts do not show meals as they were but how it should be. It is not sure that people lived up to these expectations. Both a Greco-Roman literature and a rabbinic literature should help me to answer the question of how the order, content, and regulations of the banquet do form the identity of Paul's *ekklēsia* at Galatia and Corinth.

1.4 Social Identity Theory

The theory I use is a social identity theory. I chose this theory because it focuses on relations, membership, and identity, which is under my area of interest. The pioneer for a social identity theory is Henri Tajfel (1919–1982), who defines social identity as follows:

Social identity will be understood as that part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership.³⁷

It means that membership in certain groups affects everyone's self-image. It is worth noting that a social identity theory primarily is about a relation between an individual's self-concept and a social context, situation, not groups. In this thesis, I use a social identity theory in order to show that meals make impact on groups, form them and their identities. My interest is to

³⁵ "Plutarch." Britannica Academic, Encyclopædia Britannica, (25 Jul. 2018). academic-eb-com.ludwig.lub.lu.se/levels/collegiate/article/Plutarch/60464. Accessed 14 May. 2021.

³⁶ "Tosefta." Britannica Academic, Encyclopædia Britannica, (20 Jul. 1998). academic-eb-com.ludwig.lub.lu.se/levels/collegiate/article/Tosefta/73010. Accessed 14 May. 2021.

³⁷ Henri Tajfel, *Differentiation Between Social Groups: Studies in the Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations* (London: Academic Press with European Association of Experiential Social Psychology, 1978), 61.

use a social identity on a group-level, not an individual level. It means that I will describe and discuss group values which are visible at banquets, and how these values make impact on other groups and form their identity.

A social identity theory says that groups and individuals stand in comparison with other groups and individuals, to preserve group distinctiveness.³⁸ If a group perceives itself to be inferior to another group, then the inferior group can respond in three various ways. First, the inferior group can become more like the superior group, which can entail the assimilation of the groups as a whole into the superior group. Second, the inferior group may redefine its characteristics in new and more positively values. Third, the inferior group can invent new characteristics that establish positive values.³⁹

Samuel Gaertner proposed a solution to problems concerning intergroups bias and conflicts within intergroups. The solution is a new common group with a new common identity, involving members of two subgroups bias to develop more positive attitudes of the former outgroup members.⁴⁰ A new group does not mean that sub-groups must forsake their previous characterizations entirely. The superordinate and sub-groups identities may be salient and may also be important to preserve.⁴¹ If a subgroup has some members within the superordinate subgroup and some outside it is called a cross-cutting subgroup.⁴² In this thesis Jesus-believers are identified as a main, superordinate group. Jesus-believing Jews and Jesus-believing non-Jews are identified as two cross-cutting subgroups because Jews and non-Jews are also found outside. Amélie Mummendey and Michael Wazel suggest that inclusivity is a key to success.⁴³ And Philip Esler summarizes their reasoning about discrimination as follows: “some subgroups, typically those with high status or power, may project their subgroup identities onto the superordinate category and regard the latter as synonymous with their subgroup identity.”⁴⁴

³⁸ Tajfel, *Differentiation Between Social Groups*, 9.

³⁹ Tajfel, *Differentiation Between Social Groups*, 93–97.

⁴⁰ Samuel L. Gaertner and John F. Dovidio, *Reducing Ingroup Bias: The Common Ingroup Identity Model* (Philadelphia: Psychology Press, 2000), 7–8.

⁴¹ Gaertner and Dovidio, *Reducing Ingroup Bias*, 20.

⁴² Francis Philip Esler, “An Outline of Social Identity Theory” in *T&T Clark Handbook to Social Identity in the New Testament*, ed. J. Brian Tucker and Coleman A. Baker (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2014), 31.

⁴³ Amélie Mummendey and Michael Wenzel, “Social Discrimination and Tolerance in Intergroup Relations: Reactions to Intergroup Difference,” *Personality & Social Psychology Review* 3 (1999):158–174, 168-169, doi: 10.1207/s15327957pspr0302_4.

⁴⁴ Esler, “An Outline of Social Identity Theory”, 31.

In this thesis, I define Jesus-believing Jews as a subgroup with high status due to their status as God's chosen people, and I define Jesus-believing non-Jews as a subgroup with low status due to their assumed moral impurity, which is discussed later. I am going to operate with social identity theory by examining how table fellowship expresses group values, all this that is important and central for just Jesus-believers, and which creates identity. The identity-shaping character of meals is based on Ben Witherington's standpoint, that "behavior at meals was taken as an indicator or barometer of the society's or club's or group's character in microcosm."⁴⁵ This position helps to understand an identity's connection with equality and community, because behavior at meals mirror an identity of a group. Behaviors at meals promoting or hindering equality, community, fellowship, or unity say something about group identity. Behaviors at meals are associated with equality and community, because meals are about sharing foods, wine, and conversations with other people. Equality can be about an equal sharing or equal treatment of other people.

Constructivism

I find that a social identity theory is based on constructivism. According to Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, knowledge is constructed by interaction between a society and individuals.⁴⁶ They claim that individuals construct society and institutions, and individuals affect institutions' legitimation. Berger and Luckmann define a social institution as a "reciprocal typification of habitualized actions by types of actors".⁴⁷ Institutions imply historicity because they are the products of history. Institutions imply also control by setting patterns of conduct.⁴⁸ Institutions can control individual's biology: food, individual's sexuality or death.⁴⁹ Individuals can affect on a society, and a society can affect on individuals. Mats Börjesson summarizes Mary Douglas' view, where a society operates through an individual by norms, categories, concepts, analogies, or metaphors and the individual choices are far from being a private affair. Furthermore, individual's opinions,

⁴⁵ Ben Witherington, *Making a Meal of It: Rethinking the Theology of the Lord's Supper* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2007), 35.

⁴⁶ Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (London: Penguin, 1991), 72.

⁴⁷ Berger and Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality*, 72.

⁴⁸ Berger and Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality*, 3.

⁴⁹ Mats Alvesson and Kaj Sköldböck, *Tolkning och reflektion: vetenskapsfilosofi och kvalitativ metod* (Lund: Studentlitteratur, 2017), 47.

especially on morality, is governed by a society, kinship, or conduct.⁵⁰ This is in the line with Emile Durkheim, according to whom, solidarity is the heart of society, whereas an individual is born into society and formed by the socially given classifications.⁵¹ Both a social identity theory and the social-scientific criticism also can be understood as a hermeneutical task. Paul Ricoeur minted a third hermeneutical circle, between explanation and understanding, combining scientific and humanistic methods.⁵²

According to Ricoeur, text interpretation is the starting point in hermeneutics, and not facts or data. The text can consist of written and spoken words but also of social actions, which are perceived as symbols. Facts, on the other hand, can appear as a result, not a starting point through an interpretive process.⁵³ It is excellent to use narrative elements in the writing of history without reducing the result to fiction.⁵⁴ For my thesis it means, that a text analysis, for instance social actions of Jesus-believers can reveal some facts about ancient customs. On the other hand, I will claim, that pre-understanding is also needed to analyze a text. Furthermore, it is important to put a text in a context. According to Friedrich Schleiermacher there is always something behind the text to which we must look for: the historical and cultural context, and the psychological aspects,⁵⁵ which I agree with. He also suggests that the interpretative process moves from the reader through the text, in light of temporal and cultural context, toward the original intention of the author.

In my opinion, an interpreter can move toward the intention of the author, but it does not mean that the interpreter can reach complete knowledge about the intention of the author. Furthermore, my prime aim with this thesis is not to reach information about Paul's intention, even though the analysis may provide with some information about Paul's vision concerning meals.

⁵⁰ Börjesson, *Diskurser och konstruktioner*, 47–48.

⁵¹ Börjesson, *Diskurser och konstruktioner*, 40.

⁵² Alvesson and Sköldberg, *Tolkning och reflektion*, 135.

⁵³ Alvesson and Sköldberg, *Tolkning och reflektion*, 146.

⁵⁴ Alvesson and Sköldberg, *Tolkning och reflektion*, 159.

⁵⁵ Stanley E. Porter and Jason Robinson. *Hermeneutics: An Introduction to Interpretive Theory* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 31–32.

1.5 Perspective

Paul within Judaism

In this thesis, I will analyze the chosen pericopes in the First Epistle to the Corinthians and the Epistle to the Galatians, according to the so-called Paul within Judaism perspective.⁵⁶ I have chosen Paul within Judaism, because this perspective is inclusive and takes advantages of Jewish features and traditions. It may be seen that Jewish features or Jewishness are not compatible with Greco-Roman banquets and present totally different meal traditions and customs. I do not agree with it. I will claim, based on Smith, that a generic banquet model was the same for both Jews and non-Jews.⁵⁷ According to this view, Jesus-believing Jews and Jesus-believing non-Jews shared similar meal customs, and these customs can be seen as a common denominator for these two groups. Furthermore, similar meal customs are also a presumption for community and equality, because similarities focus on unity, not division. Because I focus on unity in this thesis, I find that Greco-Roman banquets are coherent with Paul within Judaism perspective because of its inclusive character.

Now, I will present below what Paul within Judaism means:

For Mark D. Nanos, this perspective means that Paul was loyal to Judaism, observed the Torah, and held that Jesus-believing non-Jews should be compelled to respect the Torah and adapt a Jewish lifestyle out of respect to Jews.⁵⁸ In Nanos' view, Paul saw the Torah as God's gift and the Torah observance as a response to God's mercy. But for Paul, the Torah observance was not leading to justification. Furthermore, Nanos suggests that Paul opposes Jewish ethnocentrism, namely Jewishness as a frame of reference for justification. According to Paul, God chose Israel to bring salvation to the whole world.⁵⁹ For this thesis Nanos' contribution implies, according to me, that Jesus-believing non-Jews had to show respect and adapt to a table fellowship with Jesus-believing Jews, without converting or circumcising. And that is my position as well.

⁵⁶ Magnus Zetterholm, "The Paul within Judaism Perspective," pages 171–193 in *Perspective on Paul: Five Views*, ed. Scot McKnight and B. J. Oropeza (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2020), 171–193.

⁵⁷ Smith, *From Symposium to Eucharist*, 175.

⁵⁸ See e.g., Mark D. Nanos, Mark D., *The Mystery of Romans: The Jewish Context of Paul's Letter* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996).

⁵⁹ Magnus Zetterholm, *Approaches to Paul: A Student's Guide to Recent Scholarship* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), 149.

For Kathy Ehrensperger, this perspective means inclusivity and diversity. According to her, the fellowship of Jesus-believing Jews and Jesus believing-non-Jews at the table does not render Jewish identity obsolete.⁶⁰ This means that Judaism or Jewish feature is still important for Jesus-movement, and Jesus-believing Jews do not need to cast out their identity marks. For Ehrensperger, the Jesus-movement have an inclusive character rather than an exclusive one. Her argument is that “the inclusion of gentiles as gentiles does not imply the exclusion of Jews as Jews.”⁶¹

Paul within Judaism is coherent with a social identity theory, because this theory says that a membership in a new group does not mean that sub-groups must forsake their previous characterizations entirely. This means that Jesus-believing Jews do need to forsake their Jewishness. The inclusive view in Paul within Judaism is also coherent with my focus on unity. Furthermore, Jewishness or Jewish features of meals make an interaction between Jesus-believing Jews and Jesus-believing non-Jews possible. Jewish laws expressed by the Apostolic Decree include Jesus-believing non-Jews in the table-fellowship with Jesus-believing Jews. Furthermore, inclusivity can be seen as a presumption in order to treat Jesus-believing non-Jews as equal as Jesus-believing Jews, which makes equality and community coherent with Paul within Judaism.

Some scholars do not agree with Paul within Judaism, and one of them is E.P. Sanders. His argument is that the problem was faith in Christ.⁶² Faith in Christ means changed conditions for Jews who will be members of the people of God.⁶³ According to Sanders, Jewish relation with God of Israel can be described by the term *covenantal nomism*, the term labeled by Sanders.⁶⁴ *Covenantal nomism* means that Jews do not need to keep the Torah to be chosen by God. It means that Jews are already chosen by election, and will manifest their desire to remain in the covenant by a proper behavior and obeying the Torah for salvation to be assured.⁶⁵ Faith in Christ changes conditions for justification: righteousness is by faith in Christ and not by works of law whether one is Jewish or Gentile.⁶⁶ It means that Jews must give up some aspects of the law.⁶⁷ Sanders claims that Paul created a new group, a “third

⁶⁰ Kathy Ehrensperger, *Searching Paul: Conversations with the Jewish Apostle to the Nations*, Collected Essays, WUNT 429 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2019), 108

⁶¹ Ehrensperger, *Searching Paul*, 108–109.

⁶² Ed Parish Sanders, *Paul, the Law and Jewish People* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 173.

⁶³ Sanders, *Paul, the Law and Jewish People*, 172.

⁶⁴ Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 422.

⁶⁵ Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 75.

⁶⁶ Sanders, *Paul, the Law and Jewish People*, 172.

⁶⁷ Sanders, *Paul, the Law and Jewish People*, 198.

race” where Jews and Gentiles were on equal ground.⁶⁸ As I understand Sanders, a “third race” was much more inclusive and open for Gentiles than Judaism.⁶⁹

In my opinion, Sanders’ view might suggest that meals and identity formed by meals, in Paul’s *ekklēsiai*, were free from Jewish features, which is not my position. Because my starting point is that Paul did not leave Judaism and Jewish traditions were important, I see *covenantal nomism* as something relevant, because it implies that Jesus-believing Jews continue to obey Torah. Paul within Judaism is also coherent with inclusivity, because Jesus-believing Jews do not have to forsake their Jewishness and they include non-Jews.

1.6 Previous Research

Dennis E. Smith

Dennis E. Smith’s book *Symposium to Eucharist: The Banquet in the Early Christian World*, contributes with knowledge about the Greco-Roman dining customs and development of early worships in Jesus-movements. Smith discusses also a relationship between Jesus-believing Jews and Jesus-believing non-Jews, and presents different views on the relationship of the Torah and dietary law, however this information is not sufficient, for instance, a discussion about the Apostolic Decree in Acts 15 is missing.

I based my study on Smith because he contributes a wide and new understanding of the banquet, which means that a generic banquet tradition is a model for Jewish banquets, as well as Greco-Roman banquets. This means that non-Jews and Jews could share some similar traditions at the table, and meals were a common denominator. This inclusive approach is coherent with my interest on unity and focus on Paul within Judaism. Furthermore, Smith’s starting point is that all Pauline congregations shared similar meal customs and these similar meal rules were applied to congregations, which is my starting point too.

Meals in the Early Christian World is a book edited by Dennis Smith and Hal Taussig.⁷⁰ The starting point is a common meal tradition. Smith and Matthias Klinghardt contribute a

⁶⁸ Sanders, *Paul, the Law and Jewish People*, 172.

⁶⁹ Sanders, *Paul, the Law and Jewish People*, 155, 172.

⁷⁰ Dennis E. Smith and Hal Taussig, ed. *Meals in the Early Christian World: Social Formation, Experimentation, and Conflict at the Table* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012).

description of the typology of the Greco-Roman banquet in this book. Matthias Klinghardt's contribution concerning the Greco-Roman banquet is based on a thesis proposed in his book *Gemeinschaftsmahl und Mahlgemeinschaft*. Klinghardt, who worked independently from Smith, proposed the same thesis as Smith, which is that non-Jews, Jews, and Jesus-believers shared a common meal tradition.⁷¹ According to a common meal tradition, the Greco-Roman meal paradigm reshapes reflections on formative stages of Rabbinic Judaism and the Jesus-movement.⁷² The main focus in *Meals in the Early Christian World* is laid on women, slaves, reclining, and sexuality at banquets in Greco-Roman culture and the Jesus-movement. However, this book could contain more essays about Jewish meals culture.

Because this study is based on Smith's analysis of banquets, I will highlight some limitations with *Symposium to Eucharist*. Firstly, Smith presents banquets as a part of the Greco-Roman world, if one considers the Jesus-movement as a something unique and separate from Greco-Roman traditions, it can be difficult to consider meals as the common denominator for Jews and non-Jews. Furthermore, Smith assumes that entertainment or worships activities in 1 Cor 12 and 14 took place at table in the light of the Greco-Roman banquet tradition. This assumption is only relevant if one understands meals in the light of the Greco-Roman banquet tradition. Furthermore, I appreciate Smith's analysis of the Greco-Roman banquets, he makes many good points, however, his descriptions of Jewish banquets are not as detailed and extensive as Greco-Romans banquets. Furthermore, he does not take advantages of his analysis of Jewish banquets when he discusses meals in Paul's letters. In this thesis, I fill this gap by using Paul within Judaism perspective and reading Paul's letters in the light of the Apostolic Decree.

Ben Witherington

Ben Witherington describes dining in Corinth in his book *Making a Meal of It: Rethinking the Theology of the Lord's Supper*. He sees a reference between "the cup of blessing" in 1 Cor 10:16 and the wine drinking at the end of the Jewish meal.⁷³ He treats the Lord's Supper

⁷¹ Taussig, "Introduction," pages 1–5 in *Meals in the Early Christian World: Social Formation, Experimentation, and Conflict at the Table*, ed. Dennis E. Smith and Hal Taussig (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012), 1.

⁷² Taussig, "Introduction," 2.

⁷³ Witherington, *Making a Meal of It*, 44

in 1 Cor 11 as the Passover meal.⁷⁴ He discusses idolatry in Corinth; however, it lacks reference to the Apostolic Decree. Witherington accounts also for the Greco-Roman banquet; however, it appears that he treats worships in the community in Corinth as something separated from the Greco-Roman banquet. For instance, he writes in the discussion concerning 1 Cor 11:17–34, that the reason for the inappropriate behavior in the community could be the fact that some Jesus-believers treated the meal as if it was another Greco-Roman banquet.⁷⁵ This can suggest that Paul has created a new meal tradition, which I disagree with.

Isaac W. Oliver

Isaac W Oliver contributes with the analysis of The Apostolic Decree in *Torah Praxis After 70 CE: Reading Matthew and Luke-Acts as Jewish Texts*. Oliver presents a more profound understanding of moral impurity, the Jewish laws and prohibitions that Jesus-believing non-Jews were obligated to keep during meals with Jesus-believing Jews. According to Oliver, the aim with the decree is both the eschatological inclusion of Jesus-believing non-Jews, and the governing of the daily interaction between Jews and non-Jews.⁷⁶ However, I am missing a discussion concerning sexual immorality in a relation to meals in the Pauline communities.

Edward Adams and David. G. Horrell

Christianity at Corinth: The quest for the Pauline church is a book edited by Edward Adams and David. G. Horrell, which provided with a sociocultural and historic understanding of the situation at Corinth. Particularly the chapter “House-Churches and the Eucharist” written by Jerome Murphy-O’Connor, contributes with understanding of the spatial environment of houses, where banquets at Corinth took place. However, the book lacks information about moral impurity at Corinth. Adams and Horell describe Corinth as a center for sexual promiscuity, but they tone down the problem by saying that Corinth did not stand out from others cosmopolitan cities in the empire, in the matter of sexual promiscuity.⁷⁷

⁷⁴ Witherington, *Making a Meal of It*, 4–5.

⁷⁵ Witherington, *Making a Meal of It*, 48.

⁷⁶ Oliver, *Torah Praxis After 70 CE*, 367.

⁷⁷ Edward Adams and David G. Horrell, E. Adams and D. G. Horrell, “The Scholarly Quest for Paul’s Church at Corinth: A Critical Survey,” in *Christianity at Corinth: The Quest for the Pauline Church*, ed. Edward Adams and David G. Horrell (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004), 7.

Paul Duff

Paul Duff reads the description of the Lord's Supper in 1 Cor 11:17–34, in the light of Smith, Klingarth, and Greco-Roman meals⁷⁸ According to Duff, a claim presented by Theissen and Murphy-O'Connor, that the schismata at the Lord's Supper resulted from the shoddy treatment of the poor by rich in the community, is overstated.⁷⁹ The possible problems at the table were, that some members began eating their own meal before all the members of the community arrived, or that they ate what they brought, without sharing their food.⁸⁰

My contribution to this thesis is, that I read Pauline letters in the light of the Apostolic Decree, and pay attention to sexual morality during meals. Furthermore, I treat blessings as an identity shaping element of banquets which symbolizes a full participation in a community, which I apply on 1 Cor 11:17–22.

1.7 Outline and Limitations

In the second chapter, I will analyze the Greco-Roman banquet, and the focus is on the order of the meal, elements, the spatial environment, to reach information about customs, values, and beliefs as a backdrop for understanding Jewish meals and meals in Paul's *ekklēsia*.

Next, in the third chapter, I will analyze the Jewish banquet, and the focus is on the spatial environment of the Jewish banquet with limitation to t. Ber. 4:8, and social stratification and blessing, to reach information about Jewish features as backdrop for understanding meals in Paul's *ekklēsia*.

The fourth chapter is devoted to the banquet at Paul's *ekklēsia* at Corinth, Galatia, and Antioch. First the spatial environment of the banquet will be discussed. Then, 1 Cor 11:17–22, and 11:33–34 will be analysed in “When you come together to eat, wait for one another”. Next, I will analyze the symposium as the way to build up a whole community, based on 1 Cor 14:26–33. Next, I will discuss how to overcome moral impurity at the

⁷⁸ Paul, Duff. “Alone Together: Celebrating the Lord's Supper in Corinth (1 Cor 11:17–34),” pages 555–577 in *The Eucharist- Its Origins and Contexts*, ed. David Hellholm and Dieter Sänger, Old Testament, Early Judaism, New Testament, WUNT 376 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017), 562.

⁷⁹ Duff, “Alone Together”, 575.

⁸⁰ Duff, “Alone Together”, 576.

banquet, with the focus on the incident at Antioch, and the Apostolic Decree. The limitation is drawn to Acts 15, Gal 2:1–14. Finally, I will discuss moral impurity at Corinth, with the limitation to 1 Cor 6:9–11; 8; 10:7–14.

2 Analysis: The Greco-Roman Banquet

In this part of the thesis the Greco-Roman tradition of the banquet will be analyzed to find out customs, values, and beliefs, which could have impact on Jesus-believers' meals and their identity expressed by meals. The question, which can be asked is why the Greco-Roman banquet ideology is so important for understanding Jesus-believers' identity. The fact is that Paul's banquet ideology is not originally new. Paul does not create something new from nothing, but he reinterprets already existing ideology, values, norms, and customs from the Greco-Roman world. The common misunderstanding is that Jesus-believers' meals arose from the Lord's Supper tradition. In fact, Jesus-believers' meals derived from the generic banquet tradition. However, the Lord's Supper is a variation of the Greco-Roman banquet.⁸¹ Smith's says:

I will not be arguing that Paul utilized a particular form of meal, such as the Passover meal or the meal of the mystery cults, as his model. I am instead referring to a generic meal model from the culture, one which, importantly, is utilized by groups throughout the Greco-Roman world, including Judaism and the mystery cults.⁸²

This means that the Lord's Supper, the Passover meal or the meal of the mystery cults are a form of a banquet, but these meals are not the model for the generic banquet tradition.

In this part of the thesis the following questions will be answered: What was the spatial environment of the banquet? Who could participate at the banquet? What could the Greco-Roman banquet look like? What elements were included? How guests got to prepare before the banquet's beginning? Finally, a conclusion regarding values will be drawn.

2.1 The Spatial Environment of the Banquet

The banquet took place at the hosts house, in a dining room and the invitations were sent to the guests by the host.⁸³ During the classic Greek period women did not normally appear at the banquet and there is no evidence that they even attended wedding feasts or funeral

⁸¹ Smith, *From Symposium to Eucharist*, 174–175.

⁸² Smith, *From Symposium to Eucharist*, 175.

⁸³ Smith, *From Symposium to Eucharist*, 25.

feasts.⁸⁴ According to Smith, the banquet and reclining posture were associated with the ruling class, i.e., an aristocratic male culture.⁸⁵ The reclining posture required that one was served. It implies that a host provided servants for this purpose, but it happened that guests brought their servants.⁸⁶ Boys without a full adult military status were not permitted to recline, but they sat aside their fathers or their lovers.⁸⁷ The placement of couches, where guests were reclining also revealed something about one's social position because there was an honor place at the banquet table and diners were ranked according to their position relative to the honored place. However, people with low status in society could achieve a higher status at the club or community banquets based on their position within the community.⁸⁸

Women who were present at banquets were slaves, trained as entertainers, dancers, acrobats, and musicians. They were chosen by their beauty and youth, and often seem to have performed almost naked. Like boys, they ended up on the couches. Women could acquire a special status by being the constant companion of one or more men, so called *hetairai*.⁸⁹ The motif of sexual female subservience was also present at the banquet, as part of symposium tradition.⁹⁰ Later the custom was changed. By the first century CE respectable women of aristocratic class were also present at banquets, and they were reclining.⁹¹ Murray claims, that the banquet “was therefore never an exclusive marker of social status, but rather aspiration for those with leisure and wealth.”⁹²

Because different categories of people were present at banquets: men, boys, slaves, women, and prostitutes, I can see that banquets have an inclusive character, and form a community, where diversity is welcome.

⁸⁴ Murray, Cazzato and Gabriel, *The Symposium*, 294.

⁸⁵ Smith, *From Symposium to Eucharist*, 42.

⁸⁶ Smith, *From Symposium to Eucharist*, 44.

⁸⁷ Murray, Cazzato and Gabriel, *The Symposium*, 294.

⁸⁸ Smith, *From Symposium to Eucharist*, 10–11.

⁸⁹ Murray, Cazzato and Gabriel, *The Symposium*, 294.

⁹⁰ Smith, *From Symposium to Eucharist*, 42.

⁹¹ Smith, *From Symposium to Eucharist*, 43.

⁹² Murray, Cazzato and Gabriel, *The Symposium*, 141.

2.2 The Order of the Banquet

When the banquet guests arrived, some rituals took place. “A servant would meet the guest at the door and lead him to the dining room. There other servants would remove his shoes and wash his feet, after which he would be ready to take his place on a couch”.⁹³ Next, handwashing took place after the guests had reclined. The physical purity was important because the guests ate with their (right) hands, without a spoon. The guests used a piece of bread as napkins. These were thrown on the floor along with other scraps and eaten by the dogs that were often there for this purpose.⁹⁴ The feet cleaning was probably important because guests used couches and these could be placed so that the head of each couch would touch the foot of the other.⁹⁵

The Greek banquet consisted of two parts: the *deipnon* (δειπνον) and the *symposion* (συμπόσιον). The *deipnon* was a first course of the evening meal. The *symposion* was a second course, which implied symposium, “drinking party”. The Romans had the same basic courses, and they added appetizers at the beginning of the meal. The Greek also added appetizers during the Roman period.⁹⁶ Slaves brought the food and put it on the tables. The tables were arranged, so diners might share from the same table.⁹⁷ Sharing (*koinonia*) refers to the communal sense of meals, where food, drink, and entertainment are shared.⁹⁸ Even a symbolic sense of equality on the table, was present by sharing, which expressed by Athenaeus, who quoted Theopompus:

The Arcadians entertain both the masters and the slaves at their feasts, and they prepare a single table for everyone, put the food in the midst of them all, and mix wine in one mixing-bowl for everyone.⁹⁹

Sharing could also involve a social aspect by sharing conversations with each other, bonding new contacts and making friends. Plutarch, for example, refers to the friend-making character of banquets.¹⁰⁰ For him, the banquet is not just eating, it is also an occasion for friend-making:

⁹³ Smith, *From Symposium to Eucharist*, 27.

⁹⁴ Smith, *From Symposium to Eucharist*, 28.

⁹⁵ Smith, *From Symposium to Eucharist*, 26.

⁹⁶ Smith, *From Symposium to Eucharist*, 27.

⁹⁷ Smith, *From Symposium to Eucharist*, 28.

⁹⁸ Smith, *From Symposium to Eucharist*, 54

⁹⁹ Athenaeus, *The Learned Banqueters*, 4.149d (Olson, LCL).

¹⁰⁰ Plutarch, *Moralia. Table-Talk*, 660a. (Minar, Sandbach, LCL).

A guest comes to shaoralia. Table-talk are not only meat, wine, and dessert, but conversation, fun, and the amiability that leads to friendship. The grips and tugs of wrestling require fine sand; the holds of friendship are won by a blend of wine and conversation.¹⁰¹

Because sharing of foods and conversations during banquets expresses community and equality (by sharing together), banquets mirror and form community and equality. However, equality also can be mixed with a social stratification. Athenaeus gives an example:

Everyone is served an equal portion of whatever food there is, although the young men are given only a half-portion of meat and do not touch anything else. Then a cup of heavily diluted wine is set on each table, and everyone who shares the table drinks from this in common; after they eat, another cup is served. A shared mixing-bowl of wine and water is prepared for the boys; the old men are permitted to drink more if they want. The woman in charge of the mess makes a show of removing the best food that has been served from the table and giving it to the men who have won a good reputation in war or for their intelligence.¹⁰²

The guests have shared the wine in common, and an equal portion of food has been served, which expressed a full participation. However, old men were superior compared to young boys because the old men might eat and drink more. Furthermore, men with a good reputation in war were served the best food, which marked a social stratification. To serve different types of food to different categories of guests was a Roman custom.¹⁰³

The menu at the banquet consisted of bread, vegetables, fish, or meat. However, meat was scarce and available only during festive occasions when sacrifices were made.¹⁰⁴ The *symposion* was preceded by a formal ritual, a transition from main course to second course. The ritual consisted of a removal of tables, a handwashing, the libation of an unmixed wine, which was offered to “the good daemon” or “Good Deity” (*agathou daimonos*) and the singing of a “paean” (*paianizein*), which was a victory or trump song without religious significance.¹⁰⁵ The wine ceremonies could be varied from place to place. The “Good Deity”

¹⁰¹ Plutarch, *Moralia. Table-Talk*, 660b. (Minar, Sandbach, LCL).

¹⁰² Athenaeus, *The Learned Banqueters*, 4.123c-d (Olson, LCL).

¹⁰³ Murphy-O'Connor, Jerome. “House-Churches and the Eucharist” in *Christianity at Corinth: The Quest for the Pauline Church*, ed. Edward Adams and David G. Horrell (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004), 134.

¹⁰⁴ Smith, *From Symposium to Eucharist*, 31–32.

¹⁰⁵ Smith, *From Symposium to Eucharist*, 28.

was understood as a reference to Dionysus, but some understood this as a reference to Zeus Savior.¹⁰⁶ This interpretation was enumerated by Athenaeus by quoting Philochorus:

He [Amphictyon, King of Athens] also made it a custom that, after the food, we drink just enough unmixed wine to get a taste, as a demonstration of the Good Divinity's power; and that, thereafter, the wine is drunk mixed and everyone has as much as he wants. And also that we pronounce the name of Zeus the Savior over the mixed wine, so that those who are drinking can learn the name and remember that, if they drink this way, their safety is assured.¹⁰⁷

Next, the *symposion*, “drinking party” took place. Different terms were used for this. For instance, “second tables” or “dessert”, fruits, salty nuts and dessert were served, and philosophical talks, party games or entertainment took place.¹⁰⁸ The *symposiarch* was selected among guests as the one in charge of setting the rules for the drinking party.¹⁰⁹ He decided the proportions of the mixture of water to wine in the wine bowl and guests' wine intake.¹¹⁰ Despite a “wine controller”, banquets were associated with drunkenness, bizarre behavior by entertainers and promiscuity.¹¹¹ However, drinking was also associated with something positive and good for the health, as long as it took place in moderation. Athenaeus, by quoting Eubulus, describes that three bowls of wine are good enough for sensible people. But more than that can cause unappropriated behavior.¹¹²

2.3. Summary

To sum up, the Greco-Roman banquet consisted of two parts, the *deipnon* and the *symposion*. The *deipnon* consisted of a first course of the evening meal, and the *symposion* consisted of a second course which included a drinking party. Handwashing before eating and between the *deipnon* and the *symposion* was practiced, and it had a pragmatic connotation. Before the first course, appetizers could be served. The *deipnon* was characterized by eating while the *symposion* was characterized by drinking, entertainment

¹⁰⁶ Smith, *From Symposium to Eucharist*, 29.

¹⁰⁷ Athenaeus, *The Learned Banqueters*, 2.38d (Olson, LCL).

¹⁰⁸ Smith, *From Symposium to Eucharist*, 30–31, 34.

¹⁰⁹ Smith, *From Symposium to Eucharist*, 34.

¹¹⁰ Smith, *From Symposium to Eucharist*, 34.

¹¹¹ Smith, *From Symposium to Eucharist*, 36.

¹¹² Athenaeus, *The Learned Banqueters*, 2.36b-c (Olson, LCL).

and eating dessert or snacks. Between the *symposion* and the *deipnon*, the ritual of transition took place, where an unmixed wine was drunk, which was offered to gods, and a trump song was sung. The banquet had the pagan dimensions expressed by eating meat (the *deipnon*) or drinking wine (the transition ritual and the *symposion*) offered to pagan gods.

Banquets formed equality and community. The sense of community and sharing was brought by reclining, drinking wine from the common bowl, or eating food from the same table. Sharing, on the other hand, brought a symbolic sense of equality on the table. Dining symbolized a social aspect of the banquet: pleasure and friendship. Social stratification/honor was expressed by: sitting and reclining, ranking of reclining guests, size of a food portion, and a different kind of food. Dichotomy was drawn between men and women, younger and older, these with a higher social status, and lower social status in a group or a club. However, banquets had an inclusive character, because they were open for different categories of people. It means that banquets formed and mirrored diversity.

3 The Jewish Banquet

In the previous chapter I focused on the Greco-Roman banquet, and in this chapter, the order of the Jewish banquet, its elements such as blessing, and the spatial environment will be analyzed, to get information about customs, values, and beliefs. Within Judaism, meals functioned in similar ways to those in Greco-Roman society, regarding reclining, ethical values, and the order of courses.¹¹³ The Jewish meals shared the Greco-Roman banquet customs but contained some Jewish features. The Jewish features at banquets were a way for Jews to show their special status as God's chosen people by their covenant with God. This covenant is described in Exod 19–24. God descends on Mount Sinai and gives the Torah to Moses with the following words (Exod 19:5–6): “Now therefore, if you obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession out of all the people. Indeed, the whole earth is mine, but you shall be for me a priestly kingdom and a holy nation.”¹¹⁴ This election implies obligations rather than advantages.¹¹⁵ It means that Torah observance, and circumcision are identity markers, which marked off observant Jews from other people. Keeping dietary laws or behaving in a special manner by Jews during meals was a great opportunity to show Jewish uniqueness as a “holy nation”.

3.1 The Order and Spatial Environment of the Jewish Banquet

Descriptions of the Jewish banquet can be found in Tannaitic literature. The following text is from the *t. Ber. 4:8*, and reflects a liturgical order for Jewish meals:

What is the order of a meal? Guests come in and sit down on top of benches and on top of soft seats until all [guests] come in. [After] all [guests] came in, and they (i.e., the servants) have given them [water to wash] hands, every one of them washes one hand. [When] they (i.e., the servants) poured them a cup [of wine], each one [of the guests] makes a Beracha (blessing) [for the wine] himself. [When] they (i.e., the servants) brought them appetizers, each one [of the guests] makes a Beracha [for the appetizers] himself. [After the guests] have gotten up [from their temporary seats, moved to the main eating hall] and reclined [on sofas], they [i.e., the servants] gave them [water to wash their] hands [again]. Even though he

¹¹³ Smith, *From Symposium to Eucharist*, 133–134.

¹¹⁴ Exodus 19:5–6, NRSV.

¹¹⁵ Karin Zetterholm, *Jewish Interpretation of the Bible: Ancient and Contemporary* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012), 18.

already washed one hand, [still] he [has to] wash both of his hands [again]. [After] they (i.e., the servants) poured them a cup [of wine again], even though he already made a Beracha on the first [cup of wine], he makes [another] Beracha on the second [cup of wine]. [After] they (i.e., the servants) brought in front of them [more] appetizers, even though he [already] made a Beracha on the first [set of appetizers], he makes a [new] Beracha on the second [set of appetizers], but [this time] one [person] makes a Beracha for all of them. [A person] who comes [late] after three appetizers [have been served] does not have permission to enter [the dining hall]. Rebbi Shimon Ben Gamliel says, “There was a great custom in Yerushalayim (Jerusalem). They (i.e., house owners) would hang a towel above the door. While the towel is hanging, guests can come in. [After] the towel has been removed, guests are not permitted to come in [anymore]. And there was another custom in Yerushalayim. They (i.e., house owners) would give over [the responsibility for] a meal for a butcher (i.e., a caterer). If something went wrong during the meal, they would punish the butcher [monetarily]. Everything according to the honor of the owner (i.e., the host) and everything according to the honor of the guests.”¹¹⁶

The form of the meal, according to the text, consisted of three courses: the appetizer course, the main course and the dessert course, and not any of the dietary laws are mentioned. The guests gather in an anteroom, sit on benches, the servants give them water to one hand, presumably the same hand they are to use for appetizers. Handwashing is a significant part of specific Jewish customs. Tosefta Berakot gives many examples, and explains when and how often a guest is obligated to wash his hands. For instance, *t. Ber. 5:14*. says that “washing [hands] before [the meal] (Mayim Rishonim) is optional. [Washing hands] after [the meal] (Mayim Acharonim) is obligatory”. Next, after handwashing guests are served wine which is mixed in a cup rather than a common bowl and each say the benediction over the wine individually. Then, the appetizers are served and guests say the benediction over appetizers individually. Next, the guests move to the dining room in order to recline for the main course. They wash both hands this time, the second cup of wine is mixed, and a benediction is said. Because the dessert course is served immediately after the second cup of wine, it may suggest that a second cup probably represent a beginning of the symposium and a dessert, according to Smith.¹¹⁷ His argument is based on a text from the *m. Ber. 5:6*: “If he said the Benediction over the wine before the meal, he need not say it over wine after the meal.” The conditions for the benediction are changed in the dining room, and this time one person may make

¹¹⁶ All English translation of Rabbinic texts is taken from the website *Sefaria*. [The Sefaria Library](#).

¹¹⁷ Smith, *From Symposium to Eucharist*, 146.

benediction collectively, for all the guests. The rules are expressed by *m. Ber.* 5:6: “If several people were sitting to eat not in the framework of a joint meal, each recites a blessing for himself. If they were reclined on divans to eat, which renders it a joint meal, one recites a blessing on behalf of them all.” The change of setting, from the anteroom to the dining room, from sitting to reclining, from individual blessing to collective blessing can symbolize a table fellowship, a sense of being a community because the main course may not be eaten until one reclines. It means that Jewish banquets form and mirror community and fellowship.

Wine and ceremonial cup

Another symbol of a community and unity at the banquet is wine. In the Tosefta we can read about two cups of wine but in *m. Pesah.* 10:7, which describes the Passover meal, four cups of wine are enumerated. According to Smith, the third and fourth cups represent ceremonial cups that had been added to the liturgy over the years.¹¹⁸ Wine might be served during the meal or after the meal. Wine during the meal was only an accompaniment, but the cup mixed at the end of the meal, thus at the beginning of the symposium was a ceremonial cup.¹¹⁹ The ceremonial cup at the Jewish banquet can refer to the ceremonial cup at the Greco-Roman banquet and its significance, which is mentioned by Plutarch: ” Indeed, just as the wine must be common to all, so to the conversation must be one in which all will share”.¹²⁰ The traditional Jewish wine benediction was as follows: “Blessed art Thou, O Lord, our God, King of the universe, Creator of the fruit of the vine.”¹²¹ In the Greco-Roman tradition, the wine benediction was addressed to Dionysus, “creator of the fruit of the vine.”¹²² It shows how much the Jewish banquet reinterprets and reproduces the Greco-Roman traditions.

The act of drinking of wine and conversing gives a sense of sharing, community, and equality, and just like Greco-Romans banquets, forms community and equality. The symbol of a community is also amplified by information given in the Tosefta, that a guest who comes after three appetizers have been served does not have permission to enter the dining hall. It suggests that guests who take part at the symposium are a close group at the moment, and do

¹¹⁸ Smith, *From Symposium to Eucharist*, 149.

¹¹⁹ Smith, *From Symposium to Eucharist*, 146.

¹²⁰ Plutarch, *Moralia. Table-Talk*, 614e (Minar, Sandbach, LCL).

¹²¹ Smith, *From Symposium to Eucharist*, 146. See also *m. Ber.* 6.1.

¹²² Smith, *From Symposium to Eucharist*, 146.

not want to let outsiders in. Even honor's significance is mentioned: "Everything according to the honor of the owner and everything according to the honor of the guests."

3.2 Social Stratification and Blessings at the Banquet

The Jewish banquet with reclining and sharing of meals and wine, can express not only community but also social stratification. Social stratification can be seen almost in every moment of the banquet, where the (most) senior person is placed on a special way for reclining.¹²³ In case of washing hands, the most senior person begins if there are less than five people.¹²⁴ And the most senior person gets his cup of wine first.¹²⁵ A Jewish feature which is obvious in the Tosefta, is a benediction over wine and meals, called *beracha*, which is said before drinking and eating. I wrote about the collective and individual dimension of benediction above. Just like benediction, is grace after meals, called *Birkat hamazon*, also significant, and it is an obligation. Additionally, the possibility to say *Birkat hamazon* for others, namely collective, expressed social stratification because not all guests may say *Birkat hamazon* for others.

According to *t. Ber. 5:15*, which lists individuals according to their purity, the individuals at the bottom of the purity stage, a Tumtum (a person of unknown sex), and a hermaphrodite cannot absolve others of their obligation of saying *Birkat hamazon*. However, the fact that *t. Ber. 5:15* lists different categories of people can mean that Jewish banquets were open for diversity and had an inclusive character, which is coherent with Paul within Judaism perspective because of its inclusive character.

According to social identity theory, groups, and individual can stand in comparison with other groups and individuals, to preserve group distinctiveness. A possibility to say *Birkat hamazon* for others can be seen as a marker for a distinction between individuals in groups of Jews. Women, slaves, and children are exempt from saying *Birkat hamazon*, according to *t. Ber. 5:18*. And it is difficult to say something about the presence or absence of women at or from the tannaitic table in the practice because women appear in the tannaitic texts

¹²³ *t. Ber. 5.5.*

¹²⁴ *t. Ber. 5. 6.*

¹²⁵ *t. Ber. 5.7.*

when their actions are of interest.¹²⁶ Concerning non-Jews' participation at the Jewish banquet, they are included in *t. Ber. 5.22*, in the following word:

[If] a Non-Jew says a blessing [for anything] using God's name we answer after him Amen [even if we did not hear the whole blessing]. [If] a Samaritan says a blessing [for anything] using God's name we do not answer after him Amen until we hear the whole blessing.

These words also confirm an inclusive character of Jewish banquets, because they include non-Jews.

Eliyahu Gurevich, claims in his commentaries to *Tosefta*, that saying God's name by a non-Jew was a guarantee, that a non-Jew did not say the blessing to an idol. The *Tosefta* refers only to non-Jews and not to Jesus-believers. It is impossible that when the *Tosefta* was written, the Jesus-believers were not so common, and the Jesus-believers fits as non-Jews. Moreover, it is unsure which terminology was used by Jesus-believers during the first centuries, to relate to God during the blessings. If they used only God's name, or the "father" and the "son", or only "father". Using terminology other than God's name could exclude them from the *Tosefta*.¹²⁷ In my opinion, the blessing during the Jewish banquets, was not only a marker of purity or social position, but also a marker of the monotheistic faith, which could make distinction between God-believers and non-believer. not-believing non-Jews.

3.3. Summary

To sum up, reclining, three courses, handwashing, mixing the wine with water, saying the blessing over the wine correspond to the Greco-Roman banquet. However, the act of handwashing corresponds with the ritual purity. Jewish banquets form community, equality, monotheism, and diversity. The sense of community and equality, just like in the Greco-Roman banquet, is expressed by reclining, the ceremonial cup, sharing wine and conversations. Community and the closeness of the diners is marked by the ban on entering the dining hall by guests, who come too late. Furthermore, banquets can express social

¹²⁶ Jordan Rosenblum, *Food and Identity in Early Rabbinic Judaism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 136.

¹²⁷ Eliyahu Gurevich, *Tosefta Berachot: Translated into English with a commentary*, (2010), 262, online: [untitled \(toseftaonline.org\)](http://toseftaonline.org).

stratification by position at the table, the order of handwashing or getting wine before everyone else. The blessing on the behalf of others ranks more pure individuals higher than impure. The monotheistic character of Jewish banquets is expressed by the blessing.

4 The Banquet at Paul's *Ekklēsia* at Corinth and Galatia

In previous chapters I have analyzed the Greco-Roman banquet, and Jewish banquet, with focus on the meal order, the spatial environment, purity, social stratification/honor, and Jewish features, as the backdrop for understanding the banquet at Paul's *ekklēsia*. In this chapter I will apply the results from the previous chapters, to explain in which ways meals form the identity, community, and equality in Paul's *ekklēsia* at Corinth, Galatia, and Antioch, in the light of the Greco-Roman banquet tradition and the Apostolic Decree. I will do this through the analysis of the spatial environment of the banquet at Corinth, the banquet as a common meal, which opposes a private meal in 1 Cor 11:17–22. The banquet as a symposium in 1 Cor 14:26–33, which aim is to build up a community, will also be discussed.

The required conduct during symposium will lead to a question concerning the character of *ekklēsia* and moral impurity. I will discuss how to overcome moral impurity at the banquet, with the focus on the incident at Antioch in Gal 2:1–14, and the Apostolic Decree in Acts 15. Finally, I will applicate the Apostolic Decree on moral impurity at Corinth, in 1 Cor 6:9–11; 8; 10:7–14.

4.1 Spatial Environment of the Banquet

According to David G. Horrell and Edward Adams, Jesus-believers met in private houses, since Paul refers to the community in private homes, for instance the house of Aquila and Prisca in 1 Cor 16:19.¹²⁸ The house-communities were a place for celebrating the Lord's Supper (1 Cor 11:20) and worship (1 Cor 12–14) and these celebrations were interconnected with meals. Later, I will discuss that a worship was an "entertainment" part of the banquet, the *symposion*.

¹²⁸ Adams and Horrell, "The Scholarly Quest for Paul's Church at Corinth", 11.

Jerome Murphy-O'Connor claims, that Jesus-believers met in a villa belonging to a wealthy member of the congregation.¹²⁹ This is based on “the new consensus” on the social level of Jesus-believers, developed by Gerd Theissen, which says in opposite to “the old consensus”, that early Jesus-believers come from all social levels, high and low.¹³⁰ With the villa at Anaploga, which attributes to the time of Paul, researchers could estimate room sizes and apply the house’s space to the number of members in Paul’s *ekklēsia* at Corinth, estimated to 40–50 persons.¹³¹ The number of the members and the size of houses says that all Jesus-believers could not be accommodated in the dining room (triclinium), which forced the host to divide his guests into two categories: “the first- class believers”, who dined inside and the rest who dined outside, on the courtyard (atrium). Those who dined inside were the closest friends to the host, probably of the same social class from whom the host might expect the same politeness on a future occasion. Those in the triclinium reclined while those in the atrium were forced to sit.¹³²

To sum up, the banquet could divide diners into two groups: a lower class, that were sitting, and a wealthy class, that was reclining. On the other hand, the space available makes the social stratification unavoidable.

4.2 “When You Come Together to Eat, Wait for One Another”

Since Corinth was a Roman colony it is legitimate to assume that Roman customs tinged Corinth. One Roman custom was to serve different types of food to different categories of guests.¹³³ This custom is presented below by Martial:

Since I am no longer invited to dinner at a price as formerly, why don't I get the same dinner as you? You take oysters fattened in the Lucrine pool, I cut my mouth sucking a mussel. You have mushrooms, I take pig fungi. Furthermore, you set to with turbot, I with bream. A golden turtle

¹²⁹ Murphy-O'Connor, “House-Churches and the Eucharist”, 130.

¹³⁰ Gerd Theissen, “Social Stratification in the Corinthian Community: A Contribution to the Sociology of Early Hellenistic Christianity,” in *Christianity at Corinth: The Quest for the Pauline Church*, ed. Edward Adams and David G. Horrell) Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004), 98.

¹³¹ Murphy-O'Connor, “House-Churches and the Eucharist,” 130–133.

¹³² Murphy-O'Connor, “House-Churches and the Eucharist,” 134.

¹³³ Murphy-O'Connor, “House-Churches and the Eucharist,” 135.

dove fills you up with its outsize rump, I am served with a magpie that died in its cage. Why do I dine without you, Ponticus, when I'm dining with you? Let the disappearance of the dole count for something; let's eat the same meal.¹³⁴

We can observe in this poem, that two different meals are served to two different people. These persons are not sitting or reclining together during the same banquet. It is possible that even Jesus-believers at Corinth were served different types of food, which was impacted by the physical arrangement of his house. But not only the type of food drew boundaries between different class of Jesus-believers. Those who were wealthy and had leisure time could come earlier than those of lower-class, who were not as free to dispose of their time.¹³⁵ The same situation is presented in 1 Cor 11:17–22:

¹⁷Now in the following instructions I do not commend you, because when you come together it is not for the better but for the worse. ¹⁸For, to begin with, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you; and to some extent I believe it. ¹⁹Indeed, there have to be factions among you, for only so will it become clear who among you are genuine. ²⁰When you come together, it is not really to eat the Lord's supper [κυριακὸν δεῖπνον φαγεῖν]. ²¹For when the time comes to eat [ἐν τῷ φαγεῖν], each of you goes ahead with your own supper [τὸ ἴδιον δεῖπνον], and one goes hungry and another becomes drunk. ²²What! Do you not have homes to eat and drink in? Or do you show contempt for the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What should I say to you? Should I commend you? In this matter I do not commend you!

In the pericope above, Paul pinpoints that some members are hungry, while others are drunk during the Lord's supper, which draws boundaries between wealthy members and lower-class members. Moreover, the selfish eating by the wealthy members "humiliates those who have nothing". Under such circumstances no Eucharist is possible. Paul encourages eating together: "when you come together to eat, wait for one another". Murphy-O'Connor claims, that wealthy members of Jesus-believers, who came earlier to the banquet, and made a contribution to the community meal, felt that it gave them right to think of it as "their meal" (τὸ ἴδιον δεῖπνον).¹³⁶ Furthermore, this selfish conviction was reinforced by Roman custom, which gave them right to take the best portions of food. The status of the upper classes could be acknowledged by serving them larger portions of food,

¹³⁴ Martial, *Epigrams*, 3.60 (Bailey, Loeb).

¹³⁵ Murphy-O'Connor, "House-Churches and the Eucharist," 135.

¹³⁶ Murphy-O'Connor, "House-Churches and the Eucharist," 136.

or higher quality of food and wine. This could even lead to a tendency to take more and more food, so nothing was left to lower-class Jesus-believers, which forced lower-class believers to satisfy their hunger with the Eucharist.¹³⁷

However, people with a low status in the society could achieve a higher status at the community banquets, based on their position within the community.¹³⁸ This means that even low status Jesus-believers could have been rewarded with the greater or the best portion of food because of their status in the community. This system of food portioning is related to the Roman social code of honor, where a formal meal, banquet was a great opportunity to publicly acknowledge others status, power, or influence. This is a great example of how a society affects on individuals and groups, and how groups and individuals can reproduce society's values. In 1 Cor 11:17–22 it is probably non-Jews, who reproduce Greco-Roman values, and they benefit through it by great or best portion of food or wine.

Private meal vs common meal

Peter Lampe claims, that it was the rich members who regarded the Eucharistic meal as the second table (*symposion*) alone.¹³⁹ This may imply that the Eucharistic meal was not practiced by all, but only of some exclusive groups. Smith draws a distinction between a private meal, and a common meal. A “private supper” (*idion deipnon*, 11:21) is seen as a private meal, and opposes to the Lord's supper, which is a common meal.¹⁴⁰ The question is how a communal meal turns into a private meal. A citation from Plutarch can be helpful here: “But where each guest has his own private portion, companionship perishes. This is true where there is not an equitable distribution”.¹⁴¹ “Own portion” here, refers to a private meal. Smith claims that “private” meals can still serve as “common” meals if equal portions are used. At Corinth, where some are hungry and others drunk, equal portions are not present, which classify this meal as individual.¹⁴² Regardless of the problem at the Lord's supper, Paul's exhortation to unity is clear in 1 Cor 11:33–34:

¹³⁷ Murphy-O'Connor, “House-Churches and the Eucharist,” 136.

¹³⁸ Smith, *From Symposium to Eucharist*, 10–11.

¹³⁹ Peter Lampe, “The Eucharist: Identifying with Christ on the Cross,” *Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology* 48 (1944): 36–49, 40, doi: 10.1177/002096430004800104.

¹⁴⁰ Smith, *From Symposium to Eucharist*, 191.

¹⁴¹ Plutarch. *Moralie. Table-Talk*, 644C (Minar, Sandbach, LCL)

¹⁴² Smith, *From Symposium to Eucharist* 192–193.

³³So then, my brothers and sisters, when you come together to eat, wait for one another. ³⁴If you are hungry, eat at home, so that when you come together, it will not be for your condemnation. About the other things I will give instructions when I come.

In my opinion, common meals form community, because they include other people and sharing.

Jewish features

Corinthians are told to wait for one another to eat together. In my view, this refers to the Greco-Roman banquet ideology and Jewish banquets, where sharing wine from the common bowl, a ceremonial cup, or sharing food from the table, represents a full participation in a group, and equality. These activities form community and equality in Paul's *ekklēsia*.

The exhortation to eat together can also refer to Jewish banquet features, where a person who comes late after three appetizers have been served, does not have permission to enter the dining hall. In Corinth, it was impossible for all members to recline because of the spatial limitation. Although, the fact that some were reclining in a triclinium and some were sitting in the atrium, it would not be a problem, if all members came at the same time.

Blessing

Coming at the same time and dining together is, according to me, a prerequisite for saying the blessings on behalf of others because the change from the individual blessing to collective one, symbolizes a table fellowship and community. *Beracha* and *Birkat hamazon* are Jewish features, and because Paul does not leave Judaism, it would not be so strange that Jewish features appeared in Paul's *ekklēsia*. Saying a blessing belonged to the Greco-Roman tradition, and the Jewish features as well. However, it is unclear which terminology concerning God, the Jesus-believers would use. First Corinthians 11 refers to the Lord's Supper, which still fits under the banquet tradition. However, I will claim that Paul's exhortation to wait for one another could apply to all communal meals, and not only the Lord's Supper. My argument is as follows: if an exclusive, high-status group of Jesus-believers comes early to eat and drink together, what happens with low-status Jesus-believers, who are not present when the ceremonial cup is drinking or blessing are pronounced collectively, as an expression of unity.

To wait for one another to eat together, can also mean, in my opinion, that Paul makes demands on Jesus-believers, who consisted probably of more non-Jews than Jews (Corinth was a Roman colony), that all members follow the Jewish meal customs, which was, *inter alia*, reciting blessing on behalf of other guests. One scholar who argues that Paul was keeping the Jewish law is Mark Nanos. According to him Paul was a “good” Jew, which involved practicing the Torah because of conviction or covenant fidelity.¹⁴³

Hospitality

Mark Finney suggests a different interpretation of 1 Cor 11:33, where the verb ἐκδέχομαι means expect someone or welcome someone/something, and not wait for one another. On this reading, the wealthier Jesus believers are recommended to welcome and receive the poorer believer to the fellowship meal and the Lord’s Supper.¹⁴⁴ He writes that Paul “calls upon the wealthier believers to actually remove the barriers of status differentiation and to receive the poorer members as equal participants of the fellowship meal and the Lord’s Supper.”¹⁴⁵

Finney highlights welcoming and hospitality as something important for Paul. Ehrensperger also emphasizes hospitality in the First Corinthians and the Romans. According to her, “hospitality is of absolute importance, and thus table-fellowship is the key practice of life in Christ.”¹⁴⁶ She claims that the main concern in 1 Cor 11:17–26 is that the fellowship at the shared table is at risk of being disturbed, if not destroyed.¹⁴⁷ Hospitality means diversity: diners do not have to become identical and eat the same.¹⁴⁸ This is coherent with a social identity theory, which says that sub-groups do not have to forsake their previous characterizations entirely. Diversity is also coherent with Judaism, because different categories of people might be present at Jewish banquets.

¹⁴³ Ryder Wishart, R. Wishart, “Paul and the Law: Mark Nanos, Brian Rosner and the Common-Law Tradition,” *Journal of Greco-Roman Christianity & Judaism* 11 (2015):153–177, 158.

¹⁴⁴ Mark Finney, “Social Identity and Conflict in Corinth: 1 Corinthians 11.17–34 in Context,” in *T&T Clark Handbook to Social Identity in the New Testament*, ed. Brian J. Tucker and Coleman A. Baker (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2014), 282.

¹⁴⁵ Finney, “Social Identity and Conflict in Corinth,” 283.

¹⁴⁶ Ehrensperger, *Searching Paul*, 106.

¹⁴⁷ Ehrensperger, *Searching Paul*, 106.

¹⁴⁸ Ehrensperger, *Searching Paul*, 106.

However, I do not think that diversity means that Jesus-believers do not have to respect or observe some Jewish laws or behave properly. I will claim that this is a presumption for the table-fellowship. Ehrensperger does not see Jewish identity as the obstacle to table-fellowship, but hierarchies, and the humiliation of the brother/sister in Christ.”¹⁴⁹

I would like to draw attention to some Jewish features. I agree that Paul will see all members equal at the banquet, however I will argue for that equality can be achieved through sharing food and wine at the same time and saying blessing collectively. The words from 1 Cor 11:21, which say that “one goes hungry and another drunk”, can suggest, according to me, that some members have already started with the symposium and some did not get a chance to start with the first course, which is challenging the Jewish view of the banquet, which I described above. I will draw the conclusion that the exhortation to remove the barriers of status differentiation sounds risky because the lack of respect for honor codes could have led to insults of influential members, who provided the congregations with economical resources or the place for meetings. My position is that the identity as equal in Christ, regardless of the economy or status could be achieved at the banquet by sharing at the same time or saying blessing, even if it means that some groups get better quality of food or bigger portions.

4.2.1 Summary

The analysis of 1 Cor 11:17–22 shows that the banquet can shape an identity and a community as “one in Christ” through meals practiced in common, namely at the same time and by “eating together”, which means sharing common foods. Bringing one’s own food to a meal classifies such a meal as private meal or individual meal, if equitable distribution of food is not used. Eating together means welcoming and forms diversity and inclusivity. This identity as a Jesus-believer demands from subgroups rejection of some values favoring inequality and lack of moderation in drinking and eating. On the one hand, a larger portion or higher quality of food or wine, reclining during common meals creates inequality among members. On the other hand, these activities create superior identity, where individuals’ social status is acknowledged. However, equality can be achieved by sharing food and wine at the same time, which expresses a symbolic sense of a pull participation in the community. Moreover, to wait for one another can be an exhortation to say the blessing on behalf of

¹⁴⁹ Ehrensperger, *Searching Paul*, 107.

others during the beginning of the symposium, which expresses fellowship. Further, the blessing as the part of the banquet, creates and mirrors a monotheistic identity, when God's name is pronounced.

4.3 Banquet as the Way to Build Up a Whole Community

In the previous chapter the drunkenness and selfishness of diners was criticized by Paul. In this chapter, I will present Paul's instructions concerning the conduct at gatherings at 1 Cor 14:26–33, which presents below:

²⁶ What should be done then, my friends? When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Let all things be done for building up. ²⁷ If anyone speaks in a tongue, let there be only two or at most three, and each in turn; and let one interpret. ²⁸ But if there is no one to interpret, let them be silent in church and speak to themselves and to God. ²⁹ Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others weigh what is said. ³⁰ If a revelation is made to someone else sitting nearby, let the first person be silent. ³¹ For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all be encouraged. ³² And the spirits of prophets are subject to the prophets, ³³ for God is a God not of disorder but of peace. As in all the churches of the saints,

This pericope lists some activities during the worship: a hymn, lesson, a revelation, a tongue, and an interpretation. The text does not mention a banquet explicit. However, Smith assumes that worship activities take place during the symposium (and after a main course) as entertainment of the evening, which relates to the Greco-Roman banquet tradition, where entertainment and conversations take place.¹⁵⁰ Because religious activities were common at any banquet,¹⁵¹ I interpret these activities as a part of a banquet.

Sharing

In Corinth, all members are free to participate and bring contribution to the worship. The similar custom presented by an antique writer Aulus Gellius, who describes a practice in

¹⁵⁰ Smith, *From Symposium to Eucharist*, 201.

¹⁵¹ Smith, *From Symposium to Eucharist*, 201.

Athens, where some banquet-guests were told not to bring food, but “ingenious topics for discussion”.¹⁵² It mirrors the friend-making dimension of the Greco-Roman banquet, which included conversations which would lead to friendship. In my opinion, the act of bringing contribution to the worship also mirrors the symbol of sharing, where sharing expresses a full participation at the community, in the light of the Greco-Roman banquet tradition. The aim with the contributions is expressed explicit in the letter: “Let all things be done for building up.”

Moderation

The congregation in Corinth is also instructed to maintain order, and not to talk at the same time, but to control oneself. In my opinion, this refers to an identity as Jesus-believers, where moderation must be kept to remain equality among members. In this case, banquets form equality through moderation.

Smith sees some parallels between “unruly drunkenness” at the meal at Corinth (11:21) and individuals who want to speak at the same time.¹⁵³ The common denominator is a self-control and moderation. This refers to Lucian’s parodic description of the conversation in his *Symposium*, where banquet-participants are drunk, and they are reading, making speeches, reciting at the same time.¹⁵⁴ Moderation of wine intake mirrors Athenaeus’ words from the previous chapter about the Greco-Roman banquet, where he does not recommend to drink for much because it can lead to an inappropriate behavior. Moderation was a quality, which was known in the Greco-Roman world, according to Athenaeus’ words. It does not mean that peoples lived up to this ideal. The Greco-Roman banquets were not associated with drunkenness and promiscuity for no reason. I will claim that a banquet can provide Jesus-believing non-Jews with a possibility to redefine their characteristics in new and more positively values through moderation, in the light of a social identity theory. Thus, a banquet is a great opportunity for Jesus-believers to show their self-control and moderation, or the contrary. Drunkenness, idolatry, and sexual immorality, which also has associations with moral impurity, is condemned by Paul, which is noticeable in 1 Cor 5:11, 1 Cor 8, and 1 Cor 10, which will be discussed later. Before that, I will draw attention to 1 Cor 11:33, where the

¹⁵² Gellius, *Attic Nights*, 7.13.1–4 (Rolfe, LCL).

¹⁵³ Smith, *From Symposium to Eucharist*, 201.

¹⁵⁴ Lucian, *Carousal*, 17 (Harmon, LCL).

character of the congregation is described as “communities of the saints” (ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις τῶν ἁγίων). The question is how congregations struggling with moral impurity could be described as “communities of the saints”, and this question will be answered below, in chapter 4.4.

4.3.1 Summary

Worship activities during the symposium were as entertainment of the evening, which relates to the Greco-Roman banquet tradition, where entertainment and conversations take place. The act of bringing contribution to a worship by Jesus-believers symbolizes sharing, and a full participation at the community, in the light of the Greco-Roman banquet tradition and Jewish banquet. The act of bringing contribution to a worship also builds up the community. The banquet guests through self-control and moderation can express equality which is a part of an identity as a Jesus-believer.

4.4 Overcoming Moral Impurity at the Banquet: The Incident at Antioch and The Apostolic Decree

Jesus-believers consisted of Jews and non-Jews, in other words two cross-cutting subgroups because both Jews and non-Jews occurred outside the Jesus-movement. Jews were known for Torah observance which included the dietary laws, while non-Jews were known by their associations with idolatry. These two cross-cutting subgroups of Jesus-believers shared one and the same table (or tables). The question is how the banquet could unite these different subgroups, who’s common denominator was the faith in Jesus. According to social identity theory, the groups with high status or power may project their attributes and values onto the inclusive category. It can mean that Jews, which positioned themselves higher on the purity stage than non-Jews, might project their attribute, which is purity onto Jesus-movement, and regarded purity as synonymous with belonging to Jesus-movement. First, I will take a look at the incident at Antioch because it depicts these two subgroups.

4.4.1 The Incident at Antioch

The incident at Antioch in Gal 2:11–18 is about Peter, one of the Jewish adherents to Jesus-believers associated with the congregation in Jerusalem, who used to eat with the Gentiles. But, when some people from James arrived, the Jerusalem visitors, he drew back and stayed away because he was afraid of those who kept the circumcision. This behavior was not liked by Paul, and he rebuked Peter, because of his hypocrisy. By leaving the table of the Gentiles, Peter implies that the Gentiles must also live as Jews.¹⁵⁵ A life as a Jew implies the keeping of the dietary laws and the practice of circumcision. The question is if the table fellowship forms the identity as a Jesus-believer, which demands the life as the Jew. Because the letter to the Galatians refers to the incident at Antioch, this suggests that even Galatians had problems of the same nature at the table between Jesus-believing Jews and Jesus-believing non-Jews.¹⁵⁶ In my opinion, the question about the table-fellowship and the identity as Jesus-believers can apply also on other congregations of Paul. A question that is raised is how much Jesus-believers needed to cast out or retain their identity as Jews or non-Jews, to eat together and share the table-fellowship.

Tensions at the table

Dunn argues that the relationship between Jews and non-Jews was complicated because of the laws concerning unclean foods, ritual purity and tithing, which led to the dominant tendency within Judaism to avoid such intercourse as much as possible.¹⁵⁷ However, he also claims that Pharisaic influence was strong during the middle decades of the first century of our era, both within Palestine and among strong concentrations of Jews in the Diaspora, which pressured Jews to strict limits in their practice of table-fellowship.¹⁵⁸ He suggests that Gentiles at Antioch were already observing the basic dietary laws and pork was not used in their table-fellowship with the Jewish believers,¹⁵⁹ since they were God-fearers and sympathized with Judaism.¹⁶⁰ In the light of social identity theory, it can mean that Jesus-believing non-Jews, which I classify as an inferior group, become like superior Jews.

¹⁵⁵ Smith, *From Symposium to Eucharist*, 185.

¹⁵⁶ Esler, *The First Christians in Their Social Worlds*, 61–62.

¹⁵⁷ James D. G. Dunn, “The Incident at Antioch (Gal 2:11–18),” *JSNT* (1983): 3–57, 17–18, doi: 10.1177/0142064X8300501801.

¹⁵⁸ Dunn, “The Incident at Antioch (Gal 2:11–18),” 14.

¹⁵⁹ Dunn, “The Incident at Antioch (Gal 2:11–18),” 31.

¹⁶⁰ Dunn, “The Incident at Antioch (Gal 2:11–18),” 21.

According to Esler, there was a Jewish ban against eating with Gentiles, which meant that non-Jews stand between two choices: no fellowship or fellowship following circumcision and acceptance of the Jewish law.¹⁶¹ Sanders does not agree with Dunn concerning the ritual purity because even Jews were ritual impure all the time.¹⁶² Sanders criticizes also Esler's statement that the act of eating together was a problem. For Sanders, the food itself was the problem because dietary laws applied to foods themselves, not to the people.¹⁶³ And the problem concerning food could be solved by choosing a vegetarian diet by Jews during eating with non-Jews.¹⁶⁴

Inclusion of non-Jews

Even though the scholars presented above, have different views concerning the table-fellowship between Jews and non-Jews, I can see a certain adaption to Jewish laws by non-Jews to eat together. Dunn writes: "The point is that earlier Christianity was not yet seen as something separate and distinct from Judaism".¹⁶⁵ He points out that the early Jesus-movement was a religion of the Jews, and with peculiar beliefs about Jesus. And when non-Jews began to embrace these particular beliefs about Jesus the question concerning joining Jews raised.¹⁶⁶ Paul, included the non-Jews within the messianic community of Israel and regarded both Jesus-believing Jews and Jesus-believing non-Jews on equal footing with God of Israel. Paul's argument was in Gal 3:28–29 as follows:

⁸ There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹ And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to the promise.

Because Abraham is mentioned so this leads to thoughts to the covenant on Mount Sinai, where the covenant meant not only advantages as God's chosen people but for the most part, obligations. According to covenantal nomism, proposed by Sanders, Jews can remain

¹⁶¹ Esler, *Community and Gospel in Luke-Acts: The Social and Political Motivations of Lucan Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 86.

¹⁶² Ed Parish Sanders, "Jewish Associations with Gentiles and Galatians 2:11–14," pages 170–188 in *The Conversation Continues: Studies in Paul & John in Honor of J. Louis Martyn*, ed. Robert Tomson Fortna and Beverly Robert Gaventa (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990), 175, 176.

¹⁶³ Sanders, "Jewish Associations with Gentiles and Galatians 2:11–14," 176.

¹⁶⁴ Sanders, "Jewish Associations with Gentiles and Galatians 2:11–14," 232–233.

¹⁶⁵ James D. G. Dunn, *Jesus, Paul and the Law: Studies in Mark and Galatians* (London: SPCK, 1990), 131.

¹⁶⁶ Dunn, *Jesus, Paul and the Law*, 131.

in the covenant by proper behavior and by obeying the Torah, for salvation to be assured.¹⁶⁷ The promise of Abraham for Jesus-believing Jews, means a continuation with Torah observance, but the Torah observance is not leading to justification in Paul's view.¹⁶⁸ For non-Jews, membership in the community was available through Christ, rather than through circumcision or dietary laws, in Paul's view. However, Jesus-believing non-Jews should be compelled to respect the Torah and adapt a Jewish lifestyle out of respect to Jews.¹⁶⁹

Purity and holiness

In my opinion, the question about the relationship, and the table-fellowship between Jesus-believing non-Jews and Jesus-believing Jews is about a social identity. Dunn claims, that "covenantal nomism included a strong sense of special privilege and prerogative over against other peoples."¹⁷⁰ For this thesis, it can mean that Jesus-believing Jews, saw themselves as much better than Jesus-believing non-Jews. Even purity codes are important to take into consideration.

The purity codes placed those closest to the Jerusalem temple at the top of the purity stage, and non-Jews at the bottom. The problem with non-Jews was, that they were considered "sinners" because of their impurity.¹⁷¹ This impurity had nothing to do with ritual impurity as Dunn claimed, but with moral impurity. Moral impurity was associated with non-Jew's involvement in Greco-Roman cults, which from Jewish perspective was considered idolatry.¹⁷² According to Zetterholm, non-Jew's moral impurity, from Paul's perspective, could be overcome by baptism.¹⁷³ It was the only option for Paul because he opposed conversion to Judaism. The base for understanding baptism, as a ritual that changes the status of non-Jews from hopeless to potentially salvable, according to Zetterholm, is 1 Cor 6:9–11:

¹⁶⁷ Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 75.

¹⁶⁸ M. Zetterholm, *Approaches to Paul*, 147–8.

¹⁶⁹ Smith, *From Symposium to Eucharist*, 186.

¹⁷⁰ Dunn, *Jesus, Paul and the Law*, 243.

¹⁷¹ See e.g., Jub.22:6.

¹⁷² Christine Elisabeth Hayes, *Gentile Impurities and Jewish Identities: Inter-marriage and Conversion from the Bible to the Talmud* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 54–58.

¹⁷³ M. Zetterholm, "The Antioch Incident Revisited," *Journal for the Study of Paul and His Letters* 6.2 (2016): 249–259, 256.

9 Do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived! Fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, male prostitutes, sodomites, **10** thieves, the greedy, drunkards, revilers, robbers—none of these will inherit the kingdom of God. **11** And this is what some of you used to be. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.

This pericope points out that those who were washed, are sanctified, and justified in Christ. Zetterholm claims, that “from Paul’s point of view, baptized non-Jews were as pure and holy as Israel, which is the reason they could be trusted and considered “brothers (and sisters),” “God beloved,” “saints,” “children,” and “heirs””.¹⁷⁴ In my opinion, this can give a contribution to the understanding “communities of the saints” (ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις τῶν ἁγίων) in First Corinthians. It means that Corinthians (and other congregations) are considered pure, and purity means diversity, because purity and baptism are used in order to include non-Jews. This inclusivity is a presumption for equality and community, because the new status made non-Jews as equal as Jews.

Furthermore, the table-fellowship is a great opportunity to mirror a status of holiness, which was practiced by Pharisees, for whom the purity laws, and especially dietary laws were important, and meals would be taken under an aura of purity.¹⁷⁵ They relocated the place of purity from the temple to the community itself.¹⁷⁶ This is described by Neusner as follows: “The table of every Jew in his home was seen to be like the table of the Lord in the Jerusalem Table.”¹⁷⁷ E. P. Sanders claims, that the idea of purity of food among Pharisees concerned priestly food rather than ordinary food.¹⁷⁸ Hanaah K. Harrington does not agree with Sanders and claims that Pharisees did not think of themselves as priests, but they strived for a holiness.¹⁷⁹ Paul described himself as a Pharisee in Phil 3:5. And the question is whether Paul wanted to create an aura of purity at the table, which would mirror the holiness of the congregations. I will answer yes, I am not certain if it had anything to do with his background as a Pharisee, but rather with the Apostolic Decree. According to Zetterholm, this decree was a part of Paul’s program of the mission to the non-Jews.¹⁸⁰ In

¹⁷⁴ M. Zetterholm, “The Antioch Incident Revisited,” 257.

¹⁷⁵ Smith, *From Symposium to Eucharist*, 151.

¹⁷⁶ Neusner Jacob and Mary Douglas, *The Idea of Purity in Ancient Judaism* (Leiden: Brill, 1973), 65–66, 117.

¹⁷⁷ Neusner and Douglas, *The Idea of Purity in Ancient Judaism*, 65.

¹⁷⁸ Ed Parish Sanders, *Jewish Law from Jesus to the Mishnah: Five Studies* (London: SCM, 1990), 197, 209.

¹⁷⁹ Hannah K. Harrington, *The Impurity Systems of Qumran and Rabbis: Biblical Foundations* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993), 69.

¹⁸⁰ M. Zetterholm, *The Formation of Christianity in Antioch*, 148.

my opinion, purity as an attribute was projected by Jesus-believing Jews onto all Jesus-believers, in the light of Paulus within Judaism.

Handwashing

Furthermore, I will pay attention to handwashing at the table, which was a fixed moment of the Greco-Roman banquet and the Jewish banquet. This moment is not mentioned in my chosen pericopes, but my assumption is that that Jesus-movement practiced it, and there was no need to mention this fixed moment in the letters, because handwashing at the table was obvious. This is only assumption, but it is possible, in the light of Paul within Judaism, that water helped members of the Jesus-movement to remove their moral impurity through mikveh or another type of bath or washing. A question that could be asked is if Jesus-believing Jews practiced baptism. I think that baptism in the Jesus-movement is worth own essay.

Because purity was not claimless, the Apostolic Decree is described below in order to show purity laws.

4.4.2 The Apostolic Decree

The Apostolic Decree is described in Acts 15, and Gal 2:1–10 relates to the same incident as the one in Acts 15 according to the most scholars, for instance Dunn,¹⁸¹ and this is my assumption too. The incident is about a disagreement between Paul and Barnabas on the one side, and “certain” people who came down from Judea to Antioch and were teaching the believers: “Unless you are circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved.” This led to a council in Jerusalem, where the apostles and elders met to consider the question if “the Gentiles must be circumcised and required to keep the law of Moses”. The result was that Peter and James introduced some regulations, the co-called Apostolic Decree, to be kept by the “brothers of Gentile origin”.

¹⁸¹ James D. G. Dunn, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians* (London: A & C Black, 1993), 88.

Forbidden items

According to the decree, Jesus-believing non-Jews were obligated to abstain from food polluted by idols (τῶν ἀλισγημάτων εἰδώλων), from sexual immorality (πορνείας), from the meat of strangled animals (τοῦ πνικτοῦ), and from blood (αἵματος). Oliver claims, that for some scholars, the decree has only a soteriological significance, which is about eschatological inclusion of non-Jews. It would imply no connection to the laws of Leviticus 17–18. But for Oliver, the Apostolic Decree, in addition to the eschatological inclusion, governs the daily interaction between Jews and non-Jews.¹⁸² His argument is that the decree should be understood in the light of Lev 17–18 because Lev “contain commandments that both Israelite and the resident alien must observe”, which offers a material relevant for tackling problems between Jews and non-Jews in the early *ekklēsia*.¹⁸³ The relation between the decree and Leviticus, which contains Jewish laws, confirms my assumption that Jesus-believing Jews projected their attributes onto all Jesus-believers. This leads to a conclusion that the aim with the decree was to preserve the purity and sanctified status of the *ekklēsia*, by requiring non-Jews to abstain from things forbidden in Act 15:20. Furthermore, the decree indicates openness because it includes non-Jews.

I interpret the projection of Jewish attributes as a “covenant nomism” for non-Jews, where non-Jews are already justified by Christ, but they are obligate to keep some laws to retain a holy status. It means that non-Jews, who will join Jesus-believers are not obligated to observe the whole Torah, but only some parts of it. In the light of social identity theory, it means that Jesus-believing non-Jews do not need to forsake their earlier characterizations entirely. It does not mean that they may continue with idolatry or sexual immorality. What I mean is that Jesus-believing non-Jews do not need to convert, get circumcised or observe the whole Torah. In my opinion, the aim with the decree can be both to preserve the purity status and sanctified character of *ekklēsia*, and to facilitate the relationship between Jews and non-Jews. I suggest that banquets provided a visibility of holiness and purity of *ekklēsia*, and the community (all members are one in Christ), which applied to all members of Jesus-believers. Such visibility by keeping some laws would be very significant for non-Jews who lacked the identity markers (Jews could show that they were circumcised or

¹⁸² Oliver, *Torah Praxis After 70 CE*, 367.

¹⁸³ Oliver, *Torah Praxis After 70 CE*, 370.

observed Torah, but non-Jews had nothing to show). In the way a banquet forms an identity.

4.4.3 Summary

Meals form and mirror an identity as Jesus-believer, which demands a form of Judaism for non-Jews, through a projection of some Jewish attributes. An identity as Jesus-believer means, that “there is no longer Jew or Greek” and “all are one in Christ”, which express that, Jesus-believing Jews, and Jesus-believing non-Jews are on equal footing with God of Israel through the promise of Abraham. The membership in the community is available through Christ, rather than male circumcision or dietary law. However, the Jews are told to continue with Torah observance, but the Torah observance is not leading to justification in Paul’s view. The superior identity as Jew, which is characterized by purity, opposes the inferior identity as non-Jews, which is characterized by moral impurity. This unbalance in the Jesus-community is balanced by baptism, which removes moral impurity from non-Jews, which is associated with non-Jew’s involvement in Greco-Roman cults, and idolatry. In other words, the identity as Jesus-believer, means the adaptation to the superior group, and its features which are projected. The Apostolic Decree, which is based on Lev 17–18, is the framework, which guarantees the purity and sanctified status of the *ekklēsia*, by requiring non-Jews to abstain from things forbidden in the decree: food polluted by idols (τῶν ἀλισγημάτων εἰδώλων), from sexual immorality (πορνείας), from the meat of strangled animals (τοῦ πνικτοῦ), and from blood (αἵματος). These forbidden items can be interpreted as a “covenant nomism” for non-Jews, where non-Jews are already justified by Christ, but they are obligate to keep some laws to retain a sanctified status. However, a banquet, by the control of conduct, stated in the decree, provides a visibility of the identity as Jesus-believers, special for non-Jews, who lack visible identity markers, that Jews have. A question, which can be raised, is baptism’s function for Jesus-believing non-Jews. Does it mean that Jesus-believing non-Jews are not obligated to be baptized because they were already in the covenant? This question cannot be answered in this thesis because the aim of this thesis is not to investigate a role of baptism. However, this question can lead to further discussion outside this thesis.

4.5 Moral Impurity at Corinth

The previous chapter was about the Apostolic Decree as a solution for preserving the purity and status and the sanctified character of the *ekklēsia* and to facilitate the relationship between Jews and non-Jews. In this chapter I will discuss two prohibitions in the decree, which I find very relevant in Corinth: the prohibition against idolatry and sexual immorality.

Idolatry

Paul warns the Corinthians “do not become idolaters” (10:7) and “flee from the worship of idols (10:14)”, and it is obvious that Corinthians are dealing with idolatry. Moreover, Paul states in 8:4 that “no idol in the world really exists,” and that “there is no God but one.” This statement shows a monotheistic character of *ekklēsia* because it opposes the polytheistic cults. Dunn writes, that the fear against idolatry was associated with the fear of contamination, and polluted food entering the body through the mouth could render the spirit unclean.¹⁸⁴ He sees also the connection between the sanctified character of the congregation and food passing through a body.¹⁸⁵

Leviticus 17:7, which determines the basis for understanding of the prohibition against idolatry, prohibited only sacrificing to “goat-demons.”¹⁸⁶ Later, the understanding of “goat demons”, during the second Temple, referred to a “cultic involvement in the idolatrous practices of the surroundings nations”.¹⁸⁷ And the targumim (the Aramaic translation of the Hebrew Bible) on Lev 17 emphasize the link between idolatry and demon worship.¹⁸⁸ The link between idolatry and demon worship makes sense in 10:21: “You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons.” The table of the Lord opposes here the table of demons.¹⁸⁹

Paul’s statement in 1 Cor 10:25: “Eat whatever is sold in the meat market without raising any question on the ground of conscience”, can be confusing because it can imply that Paul did not take seriously the Apostolic Decree. Tomson explain that meat sold at the market is not to

¹⁸⁴ Dunn, *1 Corinthians*, 66.

¹⁸⁵ Dunn, *1 Corinthians*, 66.

¹⁸⁶ *Torah Praxis After 70 CE*, 371.

¹⁸⁷ *Torah Praxis After 70 CE*, 372.

¹⁸⁸ *Torah Praxis After 70 CE*, 372.

¹⁸⁹ Smith, *From Symposium to Eucharist*, 202.

be considered as idol food in Paul's view because based on rabbinic discussion about idolatry, it is a specified intention towards idolatry that makes an object forbidden.¹⁹⁰

By the first century CE, the Jews probably read Lev 17:7–10 as a prohibition against idolatry and the command in Acts 15 concerning “what has been sacrificed to idols” encompassed not only meat but also other types of food and even drinks offered to idols, particularly wine.¹⁹¹ The demand in the Apostolic Decree to refrain from “things polluted by idols” would require Jesus-believing non-Jews to distance themselves from meat, wine, and other food items offered to idols, while also exhorting them to avoid idolatrous practices.”¹⁹² “The cup of demons” refers also not only to the polytheistic cults but also to the consumption of Gentile wine.¹⁹³ The Jewish sources, for instance Mishnah *ʿAbodah Zarah*, considers items belonging to Gentiles, such as wine or vinegar as prohibited (*Abod. Zar.* 2:3). *ʿAbod. Zar.* 5:9 lists items such as “wine used for a libation”, “objects of idol worship”, and “the idolatrous practice of sacrificing hearts of live animals” as forbidden.

In the chapter about The Greco-Roman banquet, I wrote that the Greco-Roman banquet was known for the libation of an unmixed wine, which was offered to “the good daemon” or “Good Deity”. Zeus’ name was pronounced, during a transition ritual from main course to second course, which I described in the chapter about the Greco-Roman banquet. Even meat offered to other gods could be served, but it happened mostly during festivals. “The cup of demons” refers, according to me, to the ceremonial cup during the Greco-Roman banquet, when unmixed wine was drunk. This ceremonial cup is unpolluted by idolatry. Moreover, the “cup of blessing” in 1 Cor 10:16, is according to Witherington, a technical term for the Jewish counterpart of the ceremonial cup, the cup drunk at the end of the first course over which thanksgiving or grace is said: “Blessed are thou O Lord, who gives us the fruit of the vine.”¹⁹⁴ For the Pauline *ekklēsia*, the prohibition against idolatry could mean that they were not allowed to offer wine to other gods. On the other hand, it would not be a big adaptation for them, according to me, because the Jewish banquet had similar customs to the Greco-Roman banquet. The difference was that Jews pronounced the blessing with God’s name, and not with Zeus’ name.

¹⁹⁰ Peter J. Tomson, *Paul and the Jewish Law: Halakha in the Letters of the Apostle to the Gentiles* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 218.

¹⁹¹ *Torah Praxis After 70 CE*, 373.

¹⁹² Oliver, *Torah Praxis After 70 CE*, 375.

¹⁹³ Oliver, *Torah Praxis After 70 CE*, 374.

¹⁹⁴ Witherington, *Making a Meal of It*, 44.

Sexual immorality

The next kind of moral impurity, sexual immorality refers in Lev 18 to incest (18:6–18), sexual relations with menstruating woman (v.19), adultery (v.20), male sodomy (v.22), and bestiality (v.23). The term πορνεία was used occasionally by the Second Temple period in the sense of “incest”, and Paul used the term in a wider sense to cover a variety of forbidden sexual practices.¹⁹⁵ He points out a few times that the *ekklēsia* is dealing with sexual immorality:” It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you” (5:1). And in 1 Cor 6:9–10 can we read:

9 Do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived! Fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, male prostitutes, sodomites, **10** thieves, the greedy, drunkards, revilers, robbers—none of these will inherit the kingdom of God.

1 Cor 5:11 expresses that it is not a good idea to eat or being associated with an individual who is “sexually immoral or greedy, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or robber.” Oliver claims that it is possible that the Apostolic Decree would have demanded non-Jews to abstain from incest, adultery, sodomy, bestiality, and even sexual intercourse with a woman during her menstruation.¹⁹⁶ In that case, sexual immorally, according to Paul, can refer to all these behaviors.

However, I have found that secondary literature dealing with Pauline letters discusses sexual immorally in the light of certain relationships, but not in the light of meals, which I am missing. I have argued that the Greco-Roman banquet was associated with drunkenness, bizarre behavior by entertainers and promiscuity. Therefore, the prohibition against sexual immorality can be relevant in the context of banquets in the Pauline *ekklēsia* because the Greco-Roman banquet was a backdrop for the Pauline banquets. Dunn writes that “Paul sees the parallel between food and sex, both bodily functions, and both capable of destroying membership of Christ and of rendering impure the body itself as a temple of the Holy Spirit.”¹⁹⁷ It means that sexual morality is as important as dietary laws during the banquets.

Jennifer Glancy also sees the relation between food and sex in the light of the Greco-Roman banquet. She writes that the early Jesus-movement “claimed that their enemies charged them

¹⁹⁵ Oliver, *Torah Praxis After 70 CE*, 377.

¹⁹⁶ Oliver, *Torah Praxis After 70 CE*, 379.

¹⁹⁷ Dunn, *1 Corinthians*, 66.

with an extreme breach of dining ethics, notably, dining of infants.”¹⁹⁸ She explains that cannibalistic dining is said to be followed by incestuous sex.¹⁹⁹ This is a great example of bizarre behaviors during banquets.

There is also one aspect, which can be taken into consideration, namely, Corinth was known as the “city of Aphrodite” which included both her cult (Aphrodite had the own temple in Corinth) and a center for sexual promiscuity. Some terms describing a prostitute or a fornicate were coined, for instance, “Corinthianise”, or “Corinthian girl”.²⁰⁰ Prostitution was practiced in the first-century, however this service was “hardly exclusive”. And according to Adams and Horell, Corinth did not stick up more with promiscuity than any other cosmopolitan city in the empire.²⁰¹ However, a question that could be asked is if the wealthy members of *ekklēsia*, which had both economically resources and leisure time, and came before others, practiced sexual immorality during banquets. Another question that could be asked is how a member of Jesus-movement can be pure again after forbidden, morally impure activities.

4.5.1 Summary

The banquet shapes an identity by a monotheistic and sanctified character of *ekklēsia*, expressed by the prohibition against idolatry stated in the Apostolic Decree. The prohibition against idolatry means offering food, wine and other items to other gods before and during the banquet. The ceremonial cup, namely the cup mixed at the end of the meal, thus at the beginning of the symposium, is a good example of the custom, based on the Greco-Roman banquet. This ceremonial cup can be recognized as “demonical” or polluted by idolatry by pronouncing the name of Zeus or other gods. The ceremonial cup can also be recognized as “blessed” by the pronouncing of the name of God. The next kind of moral impurity, sexual immorality (*πορνεία*), which is forbidden in the Apostolic Decree, based on Lev 18, refers to incest, sexual relations with menstruating woman, adultery, male sodomy and bestiality. Paul uses *πορνεία* in a wider sense to cover a variety of forbidden sexual practices. Because the Greco-Roman banquet was associated with drunkenness, bizarre behavior by entertainers and

¹⁹⁸ Jennifer A. Glancy, “Temptation on the Table: Christians Respond to Reclining Culture,” pages 229–238 in *Meals in the Early Christian World: Social Formation, Experimentation, and Conflict at the Table*, ed. Dennis E. Smith and Hal Taussig (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012), 230.

¹⁹⁹ Glancy, “Temptation on the Table: Christians Respond to Reclining Culture,” 230.

²⁰⁰ Adams and Horrell, “The Scholarly Quest for Paul’s Church at Corinth,” 7.

²⁰¹ Adams and Horrell, “The Scholarly Quest for Paul’s Church at Corinth,” 8.

promiscuity, the prohibition against sexual immorality can be relevant in the context of banquets in the Pauline *ekklēsia* because the Greco-Roman banquet was a backdrop for the Pauline banquets, and even Pauline banquets contained the entertainment part.

5 Conclusion and Discussion

The aim of this thesis was to investigate the community meals as an identity shaping process in Paul's *ekklēsiai*. The research question was as follows:

In which ways do meals form an identity, community, and equality in Paul's *ekklēsia* at Corinth and Galatia, in the light of the Greco-Roman banquet tradition and the Apostolic Decree?

These questions were answered through the focus on meals as a banquet, and an occasion for creating a social bonding, identity, and equality. The results show that meals shape identity by mirroring Jesus-believers' values and customs and form identities characterized by equality, community, purity, inclusivity, diversity, self-control, moderation, and monotheism.

The identity as Jesus-believer means that non-Jews, that were associated with moral impurity by idolatry, were placed at the bottom of the purity stage. The equal status of Jesus-believing non-Jews does not mean that impurity is accepted. With help of a social identity theory, I found out that Jesus-believing Jews as a superior cross-cutting group project their attributes onto all Jesus-believers. One of these attributes is moral purity. Jesus-believing non-Jews who are inferior are obligated to adapt themselves to superior, Jewish values and reproduce a Jewish identity by keeping the Apostolic Decree, which is based on Lev 17–18. This obligation is a presumption for diversity at the table and can be seen as a covenant nomism for Jesus-believing non-Jews, where non-Jews are justified by Christ and washed by baptism, and keeping the decree guarantees a holy status of *ekklēsia*. Moreover, this obligation gives a visibility during banquets, especially for non-Jews, who lack identity markers, compared to Jews, who practice a Torah observance and a circumcision. Purity and holiness of the *ekklēsia* can remain by avoiding forbidden items and activities such as: food polluted by idols (τῶν ἀλισγημάτων εἰδώλων), sexual immorality (πορνείας), the meat of strangled animals (τοῦ πνικτοῦ), and blood (αἷματος). A banquet can form an identity as pure by prohibition against food, wine and other items offered to other gods, which can be visible during the ceremonial cup, where the name of God is pronounced, and not the name of Zeus or other gods. The prohibition against idolatry also forms an identity as monotheistic. The prohibition against sexual immorality can form an identity as pure by avoiding inappropriate sexual behaviors during symposium.

The banquet forms equality and community by the ceremonial cup, the blessing, and the act of sharing food, wine, and conversation and by contribute to the worship.

An identity as “one in Christ” is expressed by meals practiced in common, namely at the same time and by “eating together”, which means sharing common food. The act of eating together also forms diversity and inclusivity.

Bringing the own food to a meal classifies such a meal as a private meal or individual meal if equitable distribution of food is not used. A larger portion or higher quality of food or wine, reclining during common meals creates a superior identity, where individuals’ social status is acknowledged. However, equality can be achieved by sharing food and wine at the same time, which expresses a symbolic sense of a full participation at the community. Moreover, drinking the ceremonial cup and saying the blessing expresses the fellowship. Further, the act of bringing contribution to a worship or sharing conversation, symbolizes sharing, and a full participation at the community and builds up the community.

The result is based on the analysis of the Greco-Roman banquet, its order of the meal, the spatial environment, purity-codes, social stratification/honor-codes. Further, I have also analyzed the Jewish banquet, which shared the Greco-Roman banquet customs. The Greco-Roman banquet and Jewish features were then applicated on the Pauline *ekklēsia*. I analyzed the spatial environment of the banquet at Corinth; the banquet as a common meal, which opposes a private meal in 1 Cor 11:17–22; the banquet as a symposium in 1 Cor 14:26–33, the aim of which is to build up a community. I also analyzed how to overcome moral impurity at the banquet, with the focus on the incident at Antioch in Gal 2:1–14, and the Apostolic Decree in Acts 15. Finally, I applicated the Apostolic Decree on moral impurity at Corinth, in 1 Cor 6:9–11; 8; 10:7–14.

The method I used was the social-scientific criticism, which works behind the text. This method helped me to explore the social and cultural location of the text and the situation behind the text by focus on banquet, purity-codes, honor-codes or social stratification, and equality. I used the Greco-Roman and rabbinic literature as tools to go behind the text, while Pauline letters were used as the prime sources. The social identity theory was used, by the focus on an interplay between Jesus-believing Jews and Jesus-believing non- Jews. Their behaviors at meals were taken as an indicator of the group’s character in microcosm. My starting point was that all congregations shared the same meal tradition. And the perspective I

used was Paul within Judaism, *covenantal nomism*, and I read the Pauline letters through the glasses of unity.

The challenge and opportunity with the social-scientific criticism is that a researcher's social or political location can impact on research questions. It means that some questions may become more or less interesting, and our history and trends may influence reading of texts. New questions to texts may arise, which is an opportunity. Another challenge with the method is that a modern interpreter does not have the same knowledge about the social location as the author or original hearer had. However, the social-scientific criticism can act as the bridge between past and present. This method can help us to come closer to a text's meaning in its original historical and social contexts. However, it is an impossible task to reveal a text's complete meaning. Another aspect, that is important to consider is the legitimacy of ancient sources and how information about banquets should be regarded. Texts about banquets express relationships as they exist and as participants wish them to be, which means that banquet descriptions do not necessarily reflect existing social realities.

The result of this thesis opens up for new questions concerning sexual (im)morality during meals and worships. I have noticed that sexual morality is discussed by scholars in context of certain relationships, for example which relationships are forbidden or not in the light of the Pauline letters. But I miss a discussion concerning sexual immorality and meals. Because a worship was an entertaining part of the banquet in early Jesus movements, it leads to a question concerning sexual immorality, women, and worship, for instance, the reception of sexual immorality, menstruating women, in other traditions during history. The result of this thesis also opens up for a new discussion concerning the blessing during meals and its significance, and baptism.

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