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μη διακρίνων τὸ σῶμα (Mē diakrinōn to sōma (romanized form))

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μη διακρίνων τὸ σῶμα

A Research Paper Presented to the Faculty
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,
Department of Exegetical Theology
in partial fulfillment of the
requirement for the degree of
Bachelor of Divinity

by

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to explore the meaning of Paul's expression *μὴ διακρίνων τὸ σῶμα* in 1 Cor. 11:29. The basic task is exegetical, but the concern which prompted the research is the pragmatic concern of meaning in use. This paper will, therefore, begin with a careful study to determine, as best as is possible, what Paul meant when he wrote the words in question. It will conclude with an analysis and evaluation of past and present application of 1 Cor. 11:29 and its context.

This task takes on importance in the light of recent efforts among Lutherans to alter the traditional Lutheran practice of linking confirmation and first communion.¹ Since the passage in question has been the biblical basis for the existing practice, it must be carefully studied before any change is possible. That is the task to which this research is applied, the task of determining the validity of past use of this text, and to report the implications this exegetical study may have for possible change in the administration of first communion.

The procedure used necessarily involves basic assumptions which control the exegesis. These must be referred to here in order that the reader may see clearly on what

interpretive principles the conclusions are based. Secondly, it is necessary to state these principles because they have been ignored (or improperly used) in past treatment of 1 Cor. 11:29. The first assumption is that biblical literature is written in specific historical settings to specific historical situations. This would indicate that what Paul says in this letter to the Corinthians is, in the first instance, intended for the Corinthians. There is no reason to believe that Paul envisioned his letters as hand-books for future church polity. Secondly, any one phrase in Scripture must be interpreted in the light of its surrounding context. The total context of each verse dominates the exegesis of that verse. To satisfactorily interpret the verse in question, it will, therefore, be necessary to isolate the specific literary unit of 1 Cor. 11:29 and to determine its function in the entire book of 1 Corinthians.

FOOTNOTE

1. Wolfgang Schenk, "Zum Gebrauch von 1. Kor. 11,29 in der Konfirmationsdebatte," Evangelische Theologie, 21 (1961), pp. 520-526. In this article Schenk goes to some trouble to document the fact that 1 Cor. 11:29 is the biblical basis for the practice of the church, both Roman and Protestant, concerning first communion. He concludes by saying, "Als Begründung dafür wird 1. Kor. 11,29 μὴ διακρίνων τὸ σῶμα bis heute ungebrochen angesehen." The specifics of his argument will be presented in Chapter V.

CHAPTER II

THE CONTEXT OF I CORINTHIANS 11:29

The first task of exegetical research after the formulation of the question is that of determining the literary form of the total context of the verses being researched. Secondly, it is a pre-requisite for understanding to determine the purpose for which the document was written. Finally, it is necessary to isolate the specific literary unit in which the segment being studied is found.

The Literary Form of I Corinthians

I Corinthians is a letter from Paul to the congregation in Corinth. It is important to note that the form is that of a letter and not that of an epistle. Adolf Deissmann has differentiated as follows,

What is a letter? A letter is something non-literary, a means of communication between persons who are separated from each other. Confidential and personal in its nature, it is intended only for the person or persons to whom it is addressed, and not at all for the public or any kind of publicity...What is an epistle? An epistle is an artistic literary form, a species of literature, just like the dialogue, the oration, or the drama. It has nothing in common with the letter except its form... the contents of an epistle are intended for publicity... everyone may read it and is expected to read it.¹

Deissmann singles out the Corinthian correspondence with these words, "The two 'epistles' to the Corinthians that have come down to us also belong to the group of real

letters."² The identification of 1 Corinthians as a letter is important because it eliminates the possibility that Paul intended his very personal suggestions to the Corinthians to be used as a hand-book or pastoral theology in future generations.

The Purpose of 1 Corinthians

The immediate purpose for which Paul wrote 1 Corinthians was to answer a number of questions which had come to him from two sources. H. Wendland describes that situation as follows,

Die Veranlassung zu dem ersten Briefe liegt in ihm selber klar zutage. Paulus hat von den Parteien in der Gemeinde wie von anderen Mis-ständen gehört (1,11;5,1). Vor allem aber haben ihm die Korinther einen Brief mit eine Reihe von Fragen gesandt, die die sittliche Haltung und die gottesdienstlichen Versammlungen der Gemeinde betrafen.³

Thus Wendland suggests that Paul had received a letter from the Corinthians with a list of questions. Secondly, Wendland notes that Paul had other sources of information about the congregation in Corinth. He cites 1 Cor. 1:11 which identifies "Chloe's people" as one of Paul's sources, and 1 Cor. 5:1 as additional evidence that Paul had received verbal information about the situation at Corinth.

The problem at Corinth was basically that the Christians there had lost their corporate consciousness.⁴ There were a number of factors in this loss. First, the church had identified too much with its Hellenistic environment. As Moffatt puts it, "The Church was in the world, as it had to be, but the world was in the Church, as it ought not to be."⁵ Secondly, the Corinthians were holding an undue regard for philosophy or wisdom.⁶ Thirdly, there were problems of social distinctions based on religious and philosophic grounds.⁷ In addition to these general factors, there were the specific problems to which Paul addresses himself in the letter. All of these are only symptomatic of the central problem, the loss of corporate consciousness by the Corinthian Christians. Therefore, Wendland is right to the point when he concludes that Paul's aim is to make the Corinthians more conscious of their corporate nature as the body of Christ.⁸

The Specific Literary Unit of 1 Corinthians 11:29

Fortunately, the outline of 1 Corinthians is not a difficult problem. Paul, as indicated above, is addressing himself to a condition among the Corinthians which had exhibited itself in several specific problems.

One of these problems was the manner in which the Corinthians were celebrating the eucharistic meal.

Paul addresses himself to this problem in 1 Cor. 11:17-34.

This textual division is clearly a single literary unit, and is, therefore, the specific context which must control the exegesis of 1 Cor. 11:29.⁹

FOOTNOTES

1. Adolf Deissman, Light From the Ancient East, translated by L. R. M. Strachan, (London: Harper and Brothers, 1927) pp. 228-229.
2. Ibid., pp. 236-237. Deissman's complete argument can be found in Chapter III, pp. 146-251.
3. H. Wendland, Die Briefe an die Korinther, in Neu Testament Deutsch, (Goettingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1948), p. 2.
4. W. Bartling, in a lecture for EN-521, St. Louis, Concordia Seminary, December 5, 1966.
5. James Moffatt, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, in The Moffatt New Testament Commentary, (London: Harpeter and Brothers, 1938), p. xv.
6. Wendland, p. 2.
7. Bartling.
8. Ibid.
9. This conclusion is supported by the following:
1) In Nestle's Novum Testamentum Graece, 1 Cor. 11:17-34 is one complete paragraph. 2) It is introduced by which indicates a new topic. 3) The contents of 11:17-34 are clearly a unit, differing from 11:16 which ends a unit and 12:1 which begins one.

CHAPTER III

THE LANGUAGE OF 1 CORINTHIANS 11:17-34

Textual and Grammatical Problems

1 Cor. 11:17-34 is textually fairly clean. Verse 29, however, does contain two possible textual variants which should be noted. The first is the addition of ἀναξίως by several minor manuscripts¹ so that the text reads "ὁ γὰρ ἐσθίων καὶ πίνων ἀναξίως κριμα ...". This reading is not supported by the most authoritative traditions and is a possible gloss or case of haplography. Therefore the variant reading is correctly rejected by Nestle and Westcott-Hort. The same manuscripts³ add τοῦ κυρίου to 29b so that it reads μὴ διακρίνων τὸ σῶμα τοῦ κυρίου. Again the variant reading is to be rejected on the same grounds. These variants could, however, cause some trouble since both are included in the text which formed the basis for the King James translation and probably represent the popular conception of the passage.

The grammar and syntax of the literary unit are clear and cause no problem. There are, however, four words whose specific meaning must be isolated if Paul's intentions in the passage are to be respected.

Significant Words and Concepts

διακρίνω

The basic dictionary meaning of διακρίνω seems to be "to separate."⁴ From this base several shades of meaning can be distinguished. Best has argued that,

διακρίνω can have three possible meanings here: (i) separate, distinguish, discern, one thing from another; (ii) exalt, honour; (iii) settle, decide, judge aright, some matter.⁵

Best's conclusion is that,

If τὸ σῶμα refers to the bread which has been used in the rite, then διακρίνειν has meaning (i) or (ii): 'not distinguishing the Body of the Lord from common food' or 'not honouring the Body of the Lord.'⁶

Best finds meanings (i) and (ii) unlikely since,

Should we not then expect the parallelism of the passage to be maintained here and have a reference to the Blood as well as the Body - 'not distinguishing (honouring) the Body and Blood of the Lord.'? It is strange also to find lacking the words 'of the Lord'. Further, if this interpretation of σῶμα is correct, it is the only place in Paul where Body and bread are so closely identified, and where it is implied that believers eat the Body.⁷

Thus Best favors meaning (iii) as the interpretation of διακρίνω. Arndt and Gingrich give "judge correctly" as the meaning of διακρίνω. They isolate 1 Cor. 11:29 and suggest that in this case διακρίνω means "recognize τὸ σῶμα."⁸ Here it is good to note that Arndt and

Gingrich give διακρίνω the meaning of "judge correctly" in 1 Cor. 11:31. Robertson and Plummer comment on διακρίνω saying,

It seems to be safe to assume that διακρίνω has the same meaning in vv. 29 and 31. In that case "discern" or "discriminate" can hardly be right, for this meaning makes poor sense in v. 31. "Judge rightly" makes good sense in both places. Of course one who forms a right judgment will discern and discriminate...but distinguish is not the primary idea.⁹

It may also be of value to note that Luther translated 1 Cor. 11:29b, "Wenn er den Leib nicht unterscheidet." Unterscheiden basically means to differentiate or distinguish, probably indicating that Luther saw the meaning as "seeing the difference" between the sacrament and an ordinary meal. This would be meaning (i) for Best. The Vulgate translates διακρίνω with the verb dijudico which has the basic meaning of "to judge" or "decide." This would coincide with Best's favored meaning (iii). Added to the authorities who translate διακρίνω as "judge correctly" is James Moffatt, who translates 11:29b "without a proper sense of the Body."¹⁰ It is probable that each of the above translations (with the possible exception of Moffatt) was pre-determined by existing concerns of the translators.

Nevertheless, it seems that the weight of the evidence as well as a majority of recent commentators favors "judge correctly" as the idea intended by διακρίνω in 1 Cor. 11:29. This is partially based on the subsequent study of what Paul meant by τὸ σῶμα in the same verse, and thus the argument will have to rest here.

δοκιμάσω

δοκιμάσω is important since many Lutherans have based their practice of examination on 1 Cor. 11:28. This verse, along with verse 29, has also been used as evidence that an age of discretion is a necessary prerequisite for reception of the Eucharist. Moulton and Milligan identify the primary sense of the word as "testing." This is consistent with ⁴⁴rndt and Gingrich, Liddell and Scott, and Kittel's Wörterbuch. There is no quarrel with the meaning of the word. Its use will be discussed in Chapter IV.

ἀναβίωσις

This word identifies the problem to which Paul was addressing himself, that of ἀναβίωσις action. Foerster points to "bringing up the other beam of the scales" or "bringing into equilibrium" as the idea behind ἀβίωσις .

He, referring to past interpretation of the word, concludes, "Hence the warning not to receive the Lord's Supper does not denote a moral quality but an attitude determined by the Gospel."¹¹ This is an important distinction, and the possibility that worthiness of participants is measured by their moral character is eliminated by the adverbial nature of the word in question. C. Craig suggests that "in an unworthy manner" is defined for us by Paul in verses 18-22 of 1 Cor. 11. This view fits the evidence and will be explored in Chapter IV.

σῶμα

It is on the interpretation of σῶμα that the exegesis finally depends. Two rival interpretations exist. The first is to take σῶμα as referring to the eucharistic body of Christ. The second view is that σῶμα refers to the "church."

arguments for σῶμα as church

Ralph Krueger suggests that the commentators are about equally divided between the two views.¹² This does not appear to be the case. Rather, it seems that the majority of recent commentators favor the latter view.¹³ Four

reasons are presented to support the interpretation of $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha$ as church:

1) The interpretation of $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha$ as church is coherent with the meaning of $\delta\iota\alpha\kappa\epsilon\acute{\iota}\nu\omega$.¹⁴ It has already been pointed out that the probable meaning of $\delta\iota\alpha\kappa\epsilon\acute{\iota}\nu\omega$ is "to judge correctly." If $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha$ were a reference to the eucharistic element, then a weak translation of $\delta\iota\alpha\kappa\epsilon\acute{\iota}\nu\omega$ would be required. If $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha$ means "church", $\delta\iota\alpha\kappa\epsilon\acute{\iota}\nu\omega$ maintains the meaning which the evidence suggests it has (cf. pp. 10-12).

2) The passage is more easily and consistently understood if we regard unworthy participation as a sin against fellowship.¹⁵ H. Wendland supports this view saying,

Unter dem unwürdigen Essen und Trinken kann nach v. 20 ff. nur die Zerstörung der Gemeinschaft beim Herrnmahl durch die lieblose Selbstsucht der Korinther verstanden werden.¹⁶

James Moffatt goes a step further and identifies the sin against fellowship as "irreverence to God." He says,

The shameful, shocking feature is not an irreverent use of the communion elements (as we call them), but irreverence to God in the person of his Church.¹⁷

C. Craig suggests that Paul intended 11:18-22 to be a definition of what unworthy action was.¹⁸ In doing so, Craig has identified the sin of the Corinthians as a

sin against fellowship indicating that in some way the failure to discern the body was identical with their unworthy action. E. Schweizer describes the sin of the Corinthians saying,

Die Schuld besteht darin, dass die Gemeinde auf die zu spät kommenden nicht wartet und ein Sakrament ohne praktische leibliches Brüderlichkeit feiern will.¹⁹

The above examples of exegetes who have seen unworthy action as a sin against fellowship. The alternative understanding of $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha$, as the eucharistic body, would require another understanding of unworthy action. It would suggest either that unworthy action was failure to distinguish between common eating and sacramental eating, or that it was failure to perceive the true nature of the sacramental gift. These views are weak, however, since they consider only part of the specific context of verses 18-22. While they recognize Paul's suggestion (verse 22) that they eat their regular meals in their homes, they fail to consider all the aspects of the sin - not waiting, eating individually, showing disrespect to the church, and putting the poor to shame.

Therefore, interpreting unworthy action as a sin against fellowship supports the corporate understanding of $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha$.

3) The interpretation of $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha$ as church fits Pauline use of the body concept and Pauline eucharistic theology. This argument is a powerful one, presented first among recent commentators by James Moffatt who says,

Paul, for whom all the divine commands were summed up in the single word, "you must love your neighbor as yourself (Rom. 13:9)," and for whom love was even greater than faith and hope, is consistent in holding that a callous break of fellowship was the most awful sin for Christians, most of all when committed at their love feast with its sacred communion. The corporate sense of "the Body" comes out in verse 29, if not in verses 27 and 28. The idea of turning the communion of the Body into a supper-party for your own set! His profound sense of the collective fellowship throbs in this word on the Eucharist, where the genuinely faithful ate and drank in the presence of their invisible Host and Head, deeply conscious of his presence, not simply in the actual rite, but in the person of each brother in prayer beside them. The Lord's was really represented in what they ate and drank, but not less really in their fellow Christians, in whom, as well as for whom, the Lord lived. The trouble with the Corinthians was that, just as they enjoyed their "speaking with tongues," till they were apt to forget that worship must take account of others in the service, so they were treating the Eucharistic-love-reunion as though it were a private religious meal for individuals or groups, which did not involve obligations to the rest of the brotherhood. A heinous offense, the Apostle protests! The vital sense of solidarity was endangered, he declared, by their irregularities at communion, and for this reason he again (x.17) turns to the corporate, mystical conception of the Body which was inseparable from the other conception and as organic to his Gospel, whether or not it was originally prompted by Eucharistic associations.²⁰

In J. A. T. Robinson's study, The Body, A Study in Pauline Theology, no mention is even made of a use

by Paul of the term $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha$ as a reference to the eucharistic body. The only reference made to 1 Cor. 11:29 by Robinson is his use of this passage to point to a connection between "the resurrection body of Christ and the physical life of the Christians."²¹ Therefore, it appears that a leading study of the body concept has not even recognized the possibility of reading $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha$ as a reference to the eucharistic body.

L. S. Thornton concludes concerning 1 Cor. 11:29,

To discern the Body rightly would be to discern also the common life in the Body of Christ, that is to say nothing less than the significance of the Gospel in and for the Church. In these words about "discerning the Body," we see one of St. Paul's greatest contributions to religion. They are the counterpart of the remark that we are one loaf, because we all partake of the One Loaf... To discern the Body then is to recognize the true pattern of the common life and our relationship to it.²²

Thus, according to all the comprehensive studies of the body concept surveyed, $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha$ must be interpreted as church in order to be consistent with the Pauline use of $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha$. To make $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha$ refer directly to the eucharistic body of Christ would be a unique use for Paul, and is, therefore, quite unlikely.

The interpretation of $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha$ as church also fits Pauline eucharistic theology. Three points are regularly

emphasized in discussing $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha$ in the context of Paul's eucharistic theology. First, it does not seem that Paul was preoccupied with the question of the nature of the elements used in the Eucharist. E. Schweizer initiates his discussion of die Abendmahltexte by with this emphasis. "Der Ton liegt also nicht auf das Substanz, der Körperlichkeit, sondern auf der damit bezeichneten Aktion... ist auch der Leib Jesu nicht als Substanz wichtig."²³

Wetter, in describing 1 Cor. 11:29, writes directly, "Es wird nicht von den Elementen, nicht von Brot und Kelch geredet, sondern von den Kulthandlung in der Christliche Feier..."²⁴ Bornkamm speaks to this point and adds,

Die Frage nach dem rechten Sakramentsverständnis ist für ihn nicht wie in späterer Zeit die Frage nach den Elementen, sonder die Frage nach den unauflöslchen inneren Zusammenhang von Sakrament und Kirche.²⁵

This point - that Paul was not concerned with the elements when he wrote these words - adds considerable weight to the evidence in favor of interpreting $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha$ as church. Schenk crystalizes the position by saying, "Problematisch ist in Korinth nicht die Elementenfragen."²⁶

H. Wendland captures the first point and introduces the second point in Pauline eucharistic theology with

his words,

Nicht in den Elementen als solchen, nicht in Essen und Trinken als solchen...sondern...Gemeinschaft des Blutes und des Leibes Christi bedeutet nicht Trinken des Blutes Christi, sondern Teilhaben an seinem Sterben, nicht Essen seines Leibes, sondern Teilhaben am Opfer seines Lebens.²⁷

The important thing for Paul is not that the participants find a magical relationship to Christ in the elements, but that participants in the eucharistic sacrament share in the death and sacrifice of Jesus. E. Schweizer points to this emphasis by saying, "τὸ σῶμα τοῦ χριστοῦ bedeutet also an allen diesen Stellen den am Kreuz für die Gemeinde hingegeben Leib."²⁸ Wetter echoes Schweizer with these words, "Leib und Blut Christi bedeuten ihm, wie wir gesehen haben, nur einen anderen Ausdruck für das Kreuz Christi, für seinem Tod."²⁹

The relationship of the cross to the Eucharist and Paul's body concept make it very difficult to read *σῶμα* as a reference to the eucharistic body. It would be possible only if Paul had exhibited a concern with the elements.

The third point is Paul's emphasis on unity in the sacrament. In 1 Cor. 10:17 Paul shows this emphasis by saying, "We who are many are one body for we all partake of one loaf." Paul Neuenzeit suggests that,

²⁷ Schweizer, *op. cit.*, pp. 100-101.

Mögerlicherweise hat Paulus seine Auffassung von der Einheit des kirchlichen Leibes Christi im Anschluss an seine Vorstellung von der Einheit des eucharistischen Leibes Christi entweckelt, denn in 1 Kor. 10 und 11 gehen beide Wirklichkeiten gerade unter dem Gesichtspunkt der Einheit immer wieder ineinander über, so dass sich oft (zum Beispiel I Kor. 11,29) nicht sicher ausmachen lässt, ob Paulus als "Leib" die Eucharistie öder die Gemeinde bezeichnet. Wahrscheinlich geht es ihm um die unscheidbare Einheit beider.³⁰

This point - that Paul's eucharistic theology emphasizes the unity of the church through the sacrament - is strong support for interpreting $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha$ as the corporate body of Christ, the church.

In summary, it appears that the Pauline concept of the body and Pauline eucharistic theology both support the understanding of $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha$ as church.

4) The interpretation of $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha$ as church fits the context of 1 Cor. 11:29 better than the interpretation of $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha$ as a reference to the eucharistic body. Much of the support for this statement is already given above under reason 3). The strength of the argument is based on its importance as a direct reflection of the necessary interpretive principle - the exegesis of a verse must be controlled by its context. Interpreting $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha$ as church fits the purpose of the entire letter to the Corinthians

and fits neatly into the context of 1 Cor. 11:17-34. The interpretation of $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha$ as a reference to the eucharistic body fits neither the total nor the specific context as well as its alternative interpretation.

Aspects of $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha$ as church

The four reasons for interpreting $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha$ as church represent the majority of recent scholars who have studied the question. From the many studies done on $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha$ several different aspects of church have been presented.

The first of these sees the $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha$ as a sociological entity, the congregation. It is a natural conclusion since Paul wrote specifically to the congregation in Corinth. However, few commentators are satisfied to view the church merely as a sociological entity, and thus it is necessary only that this view be noted.

A second view is that $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha$ as church is a metaphysical reality based on Christ.³¹ The support of this view has gained a majority of recent commentators. Ahern, although his case is overstated, points out,

First of all, V. de Visscher has shown that the Greek noun $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha$ never denoted a collectivity or social group, but always a real, physical body. If Paul identifies Christians as the body of Christ, he cannot mean that Christians are merely an organization.³²

Best adds that,

An examination of the whole of Paul's teaching about the relationship of believers to Christ reveals that there exists a real relationship between them... something in which Christ and believers are welded together.³³

Hering states the same view and gives the category a name when he says, "The body of Christ is for the Apostle indeed a metaphysical reality."³⁴ J. A. T. Robinson has also shown dissatisfaction with the sociological view, and has insisted that the *σῶμα* is "something not coporate but corporal. It did not of itself suggest a social group."³⁵

Others, led by E. Schweizer, have presented a third aspect, the *σῶμα* as related to the Kreuzesleib.³⁶ These men are very aware of the fact that without the act on Calvary and the subsequent Sunday, there would have been no living, vital *σῶμα τοῦ Χριστοῦ*. This factor seems to be a constant background to *σῶμα*.

Finally, there is the aspect of the church as it is related to the eucharistic body. C. H. Dodd illustrates this position by saying,

For Paul, at any rate, the breaking of the bread which Christ had called his body, was a sharing in the Body of Christ. "Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all share

in the one loaf..." So in receiving Christ, the Body, which is the community, nourishes all its several members and they are inseparably one in the sharing of the common life.³⁷

There is little doubt that each of these four individual emphases is but an aspect of the church. The majority of commentators have preferred to dwell on the relationship of Christ to the members of the body, always concerned that the reality of the relationship be stressed.

arguments for σῶμα as eucharistic body

It is difficult to find a defense of the interpretation of σῶμα as eucharistic body. Commentators are available who follow this interpretation, but none seems to defend it or build a case for it. This is understandable since it has been the traditional understanding since 1215 a. d.³⁸ E. Best, in defending the interpretation of σῶμα as church, points out two objections used by those who favor the eucharistic body interpretation. He puts it,

(1) σῶμα has now changed its use from earlier in the passage. (2) The judgment that comes upon the unworthy participants (v. 26) seems to suggest that the elements possessed some unnatural power which afflicted those who irreverently handled them.³⁹

The first objection assumes that σῶμα in " τοῦ σῶματος καὶ τοῦ αἵματος (verse 27)" is a reference to the

eucharistic body. This assertion would require documentation to stand. The second objection is weak. It assumes that the power which brought a judgment on the people was in the elements. This is not necessary, as Wendland points out,

Das unwürdige Essen und Trinken des heiligen Dinges bringt durch sich selbst das Gericht - das scheint der Gedanke zu sein. Allein es muss beachtet werden, das Paulus 11,31 ausdrücklich von dem Richten Christi spricht. Es handelt sich auch hier nicht um magischen Wirkung der heiligen Elemente, sondern um ein Handeln des Herrn an dem, der den Sinn des Herrnmahls verdirbt...⁴⁰

The two objections noted by Best are weak, and can easily be countered. However, Best's treatment of the traditional position is somewhat shallow. He fails to see the possible depth which the eucharistic body of Christ could have had for the Corinthians. He also seems to feel that the traditional position takes $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha$ as simply bread with no appreciation for the very real Christ of the Eucharist. However, no better treatment is available which views both sides of the question.

In summary, the following statements appear to be true. (1) The majority of scholars favor church as Paul's intended meaning for $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha$. (2) $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha$ as church fits Pauline theology better than the alternative

interpretation. (3) $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha$ as church fits both the total and specific context of 1 Cor. 11:29 better than the alternative interpretation. (4) The objections to understanding $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha$ as church do not stand up. Therefore, $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha$ should be understood as a reference to the church, the body of Christ, as described in Pauline theology.

FOOTNOTES

1. Eberhard Nestle, editor of Novum Testamentum Graece (Stuttgart: Württembergische Bibelanstalt, 25th edition, 1963), p. 445.
2. The textual evidence against these readings is considerable, specifically their absence in the three major manuscripts. Also, the presence of the same words a verse earlier make haplography or analogous repetition a possibility. There is also the additional possibility of a gloss intended to clear up an ambiguous text.
3. Nestle, p. 445.
4. The following lexical aids support this position: Arndt and Gingrich, Liddell and Scott, Kittel's Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament, and Moulton-Milligan.
5. Ernest Best, One Body in Christ, (London: S. P. C. K., 1955), p. 108.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid. Best's argument will be presented in the subdivision $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha$.
8. William F. Arndt and R. Wilbur Gingrich, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1957), s. v.
9. A. Robertson and A. Plummer, I Corinthians in the International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1924), p. 252.
10. Werner Foerster, " $\alpha\gamma\iota\omega\varsigma$," in Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, edited by Gerhard Kittel, translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1964), I, 379.
11. Ibid., p. 380.
12. Ralph Krueger, Unpublished Bachelor's Thesis, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, 1957.
13. The following have understood $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha$ as an aspect of church: Francois Amiot, J. A. T. Robinson, Eduard

Schweizer, P. Bachmann, J. Hering, H. W. Meyer, James Moffatt, H. Wendland, D. M. Ahern, G. Bornkamm, Paul G. Bretscher, G. Dellling, J. Dillistone, Paul Neuenzeit, W. Schenk, Wetter, R. C. Schulz, E. Best, and C. H. Dodd. These men have understood $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha$ as a reference to the eucharistic body: H. Sasse, R. C. H. Lanski, H. Lietzmann, J. Weiss, I. Cerfaux, and P. E. Kretzmann.

14. Best, p. 108.

15. Ibid., p. 109.

16. H. Wendland, Die Briefe an die Korinther, in Neu Testament Deutsch (Goettingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1948), p. 67.

17. James Moffatt, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, in The Moffatt New Testament Commentary (London: Harper and Brothers, 1938), p. 162.

18. Robertson and Plummer, p. 141.

19. Eduard Schweizer, " $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha$," in Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament, edited by Gerhard Kittel (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 1964), 7, 1066.

20. Moffatt, p. 173.

21. J. A. T. Robinson, The Body, A Study in Pauline Theology, in Studies in Biblical Theology (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1952), pp. 53-54.

22. L. S. Thornton, The Common Life in the Body of Christ, (Westminster: Dacre Press, 1944), pp. 342-343.

23. Schweizer, p. 1065.

24. Wetter, "Die Auffassung des Apostels Paulus vom Abendmahl," Seitschriften zum Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft, 14 (1913), p. 206.

25. G. Bornkamm, "Herrnmahl und Kirche bei Paulus," New Testament Studies, 2 (1956), p. 206.

26. Wolfgang Schenk, "Von Gebrauch 1 Kor. 11:29 in der Konfirmationsdebatte," Evangelische Theologie, 21 (1961), p. 523.
27. Wendland, p. 69.
28. Schweizer, p. 1066.
29. Wetter, p. 211.
30. Paul Neuenzeit, "Die Einheit der Kirche nach den paulinischen Hauptbriefen," Bibel und Kirche, 18 (1963), p. 43.
31. The term "metaphysical reality" is used for lack of a better term. The emphasis here is on the depth and basic character of the relationship between Christ and the members of the body.
32. D. M. Ahern, "The Christians's Union with the Body of Christ in Cor., Ga., and Rom.," Catholic Biblical Quarterly, 23 (1961), p. 206.
33. Ernest Best, "The Body of Christ," Ecumenical Review, IX (January, 1957), p. 123.
34. J. Hering, The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians, translated from the French by A. W. Heathcote and P. J. Allcock (London: The Epworth Press, 1962.), p. 20.
35. Robinson, p. 50.
36. Schweizer, pp. 1065-1066.
37. C. H. Dodd, The Meaning of Paul for Today, (New York: George H. Doran Company), pp. 142-143.
38. Schenk, p. 522.
39. Best, p. 109.
40. Wendland, p. 69.

CHAPTER IV

THE THOUGHT DEVELOPMENT OF 1 CORINTHIANS 11:17-34

Thought Development

Since the significant words have been dealt with individually, it is possible now to read these words in context in search of their meaning. As indicated in Chapter II, the literary unit to consider is 1 Cor. 11:17-34. An outline of this section is as follows:

- 17:17 An Introduction to the Problem
- 18-22 The Specifics of the Problem
- 23-26 The Sacrament as Originally Given
- 27-32 Suggestions and Explanations
- 33-34 Final Exhortation and Conclusion

The function of verse 17 is to introduce the specific problem with which Paul intended to deal. Verses 18-22 were written to identify the problem. None of Paul's readers could mistake what he was saying. They were simply destroying the unity and fellowship of the sacramental meal. In fact, they were no longer eating "The Lord's supper" since their individualistic (v. 21) and status-conscious conduct (v. 22) had destroyed the meaning of that holy meal.

The purpose of verses 23-26 is to rehabilitate the Corinthian practice of celebrating the Eucharist. In effect, Paul was saying that what he had given them they

had forgotten and he must repeat it again. In verse 26 Paul reminds the Corinthians that every celebration of the Lord's supper connects them to the Christ of calvary until He returns.

Verses 27-32 return to the problem, with suggestions and explanations. Verse 27 explains that anyone who has been destroying the meaning of this meal by eating and drinking in an unworthy manner is actually showing irreverence to Christ himself, to the Christ who live in the actual people who celebrate his supper. Verse 28 suggests, therefore, that every Corinthian should examine himself to see if he has been doing those things described in 18-22. This is good advice, since (verse 29) anyone doing these things without judging properly what he was destroying - the body - is doing no less than eating and drinking his way to a judgment. Verse 30 suggests that the Corinthians can see about them the evidence of a direct judgment from the Lord. Verses 31 and 32 are a note of comfort, telling the Corinthians that the one who judges himself correctly will not be a victim of a negative judgment of the Lord.

Verses 33 and 34 are a final plea that the unworthy, destructive action of verses 18-22 be stopped so that the

unity of the body might be demonstrated as they "wait for one another." These two verses are also a conclusion to the literary unit under question.

The Specific Function of 1 Corinthians 11:29

The words *μὴ διακρίνων τὸ σῶμα* are translated accurately by James Moffatt, "Without a proper sense of the body."¹ The function which these words have is very specific. As noted earlier, 1 Corinthians is a letter, a personal correspondence from Paul to the Corinthians with no internal indication of a pretense for posterity. In this letter Paul advises the Corinthians to examine themselves (v. 28) in the light of his immediate comments on the sacrament (verses 17-34). Verse 29 is Paul's explanation that those who celebrate the sacrament "Without a proper sense of the body" are liable for judgment from the very Lord whom their unworthy action offends. This judgment comes to those who have no proper sense of the body, and thus the real crime is that the unworthy action of the Corinthians was destroying their corporate consciousness, the sense of the body.

Therefore, the purpose of these words, *μὴ διακρίνων τὸ σῶμα*, was to help the Corinthians to rehabilitate their corporate consciousness.

FOOTNOTE

1. James Moffatt, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, in The Moffatt New Testament Commentary (London: Harper and Brothers, 1938), p. 162.

CHAPTER V

PRACTICAL THEOLOGY AND 1 CORINTHIANS 11:29

The Historical Understanding of 1 Corinthians 11:29

Two sources will be used to outline the pattern of the past understanding of 1 Cor. 11:29. James Moffatt has surveyed the understanding of this passage in the early church and reports,

The corporate interpretation was assumed to be natural in verse 27 already by leading expositors of the Early Church, as by Chrysostom, who expounds that verse: "Carelessly? How could it be otherwise, when the man pays no heed to the hungry - worse still, puts him to shame?" In fact, the preacher sees Paul denouncing the godly who are so inhuman, not only at the celebration, but before they come to it and even afterwards. This dishonour done to members of the Body is pronounced the damning sin of sacrilege. Pelagius also takes this view as for granted, and illustrated it by referring to the word of Jesus about being reconciled to a brother before presenting any gift at the altar; a life stained by quarrelling and selfishness is an insult to the Lord, if it dares to approach his table. Augustine's comments on xi.27 in connection with love and unity are equally significant for this interpretation of Paul's language (serm. 227, 272). Earlier still, in days when the Eucharist could still be called a love feast, as by Ignatius, the Church order of the Didache retains this tradition; not only does the prayer offered over the bread recall the unity of the Church ("As this broken bread was once scattered on the hills and then gathered to become one loaf, so may thy Church be gathered from the ends of the earth into thy kingdom."), but no member is allowed to take part in communion till he has settled any quarrel with a fellow Christian.¹

Moffatt has offered three names and the Didache as examples from the early church which support the corporate

understanding of $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha$. These, of course, indicate only that Moffatt's understanding of $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha$ has roots in the earliest days of the church. More pertinent to the research is the study done by Wolfgang Schenk who says,

Seit dem Hochmittelalter ändert sich das in der römischen Kirche und auch die Reformation übernimmt dieses mittelalterliche Erbe und steht in dieser Tradition: Seit dem IV Laterankonzil (1215) - definitiv aber seit dem Tridentinum - und bis heute redet man in diesem Bereich von den "anni discretionis" als Voraussetzung der Erstkommunion und meint damit die Fähigkeit, die eucharistische Speise von gewöhnliche Speise zu unterscheiden. Als Begründung dafür wird 1 Kor. 11,29 $\mu\eta \delta\iota\alpha\kappa\epsilon\iota\tau\omega\upsilon$ $\tau\omicron \sigma\omega\mu\alpha$ bis heute ungebrochen angesehen.²

The Lutheran Understanding of 1 Corinthians 11:29

Schenk's work demonstrates that the traditional view of 1 Cor. 11:29 has been that $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha$ referred to the eucharistic body³ from 1215 a. d. on. The Augsburg Confession of the Lutheran Church shows that Lutheran theology adopted the traditional practice of examination.⁴ Martin Luther's translation of 1 Cor. 11:29 (wenn er den Leib nicht unterscheidet) is evidence that he accepted the traditional view of differentiating between sacramental eating and ordinary eating.

Missouri Synod Lutheran theology has used this passage in two ways. First, they have used 1 Cor. 11:29 as a supporting proof text for the doctrine of the real presence.⁵ Secondly, they have used 1 Cor. 11:29 as a definitive word from God on the question of who is eligible to receive the eucharistic sacrament. Walther's Pastoraltheologie suggests that,

Da nach Gottes Wort ein jeder, welcher zum Tisch des Herrn gehen will, sich vorher prüfen und den Leib des Herrn unterscheiden soll (1 Kor. 11,28.29).⁶

Fritz has merely translated Walther, as he himself acknowledges.⁷

The best example of what Missouri Synod Lutherans are presently doing with 1 Cor. 11:29 comes from the current edition of Luther's Small Catechism. Question 319 reads, "Why should we consider the true worthiness of a communicant?" and this answer is given,

We should consider this because St. Paul expressly instructs us: "Let a man examine himself and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body." 1 Cor. 11:28,29.⁸

Therefore, as suggested by Schenk,⁹ the traditional use of 1 Cor. 11:29 has been used to require participants in the Eucharist to have reached an annus discretionis.

Thus, linked with 1 Cor. 11:28, the passage in question is the basis for the Missouri Synod Lutheran practice of confirmation as preparation for one's first communion.

The Validity of Past Understanding

Can 1 Cor. 11:29 be used as a text which requires a certain level of instruction for participation in the Eucharist? The tentative answer is no, for two reasons. First, as was emphasized early in this study, Paul's letter to the Corinthians was written to them in the first place for their own specific problems. It was not intended to be a hand-book for pastoral theology for all ages. Secondly, the text itself does not support a required annus discretionis. Schenk points to the difference by saying,

Aber genau gesehen müsste im Sinne der mittelalterlichen, von Luther übernommenen und bis Lietzmann Tradierten Exegese (eucharistisches Brot von profanen Bröt unterscheiden) die Textgrundlage auch anders heissen: *ἢ διακρίνων τὸν κέρον* (!) Es heisst bei Paulus aber *ἢ διακρίνων τὸ σῶμα*. Was bedeutet diese Ergebnis für das Konfirmationsproblem? Es scheint nach dem ausgeführten klar, dass die "Konfirmation" ihre Existenz nur einem exegetischen Missverständnis verdankt.⁹

This is a strong statement and cannot be totally supported, but the exegetical conclusion seems correct, in saying that the biblical ground for the practice of confirmation is based on a misunderstanding of the text.

Therefore, it appears that the use which Lutheran theology has made of I Cor. 11:29 is invalid. It has created a rule for present day Christians from Paul's advice to the Corinthians, and it has based this rule on a misunderstanding of the text.

FOOTNOTES

1. James Moffatt, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, in The Moffatt New Testament Commentary (London: Harper and Brothers, 1938), pp. 172-173.
2. W. Schenk, "Von Gebrauch I Kor. 11,29 in der Konfirmationsdebatte," Evangelische Theologie, 21 (1961), p. 522.
3. Schenk acutally states that the traditional view refers to the bread, but this seems to be an oversimplification and so the term "eucharistic body" is used here.
4. The Book of Concord, translated from the German and Latin by Theodore G. Tappert, (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1959), p. 61.
5. Francis Pieper, Christian Dogmatics (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1953), p. 375.
6. C. F. W. Walther, Pastoraltheologie (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1898), p. 191.
7. J. H. C. Fritz, Pastoral Theology (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1932), pp. 127, 130, 131, and Preface.
8. Dr. Martin Luther's Small Catechism, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1963), p. 203.
9. Schenk, p. 522.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Conclusions

Although the basic task of this study was to research and report what scholars have said concerning 1 Cor. 11:29, certain conclusions are inevitable and are summarized as follows:

1) 1 Corinthians is a personal letter written to the Corinthians and has meaning for moderns only in the light of its eternal truths. This means that it is improper to lift individual words and phrases (such as ΣΟΚΙΜΑΣΕΙΤΩ and ἢν διακρίνω τὸ σῶμα) from the context of the letter and use them to determine and to give authority to church polity today.

2) In 1 Cor. 11:29 σῶμα is a reference to church. This conclusion is based on the research presented in Chapter III.

3) The function of 1 Cor. 11:29 was to inform the Corinthians that continued failure to value and understand their corporate consciousness as the body of Christ would result in a judgment from the Lord.

4) Lutheran theology has improperly used 1 Cor. 11:29 as a proof text for an annus discretionis required for participation in the Eucharist.¹

Implications

Since an improper understanding of 1 Cor. 11:29 has been so widely used as the basis of much church policy on confirmation and first communion, the revised understanding could imply wide-spread changes in practice. Possible implications are:

1) The question of infant communion must be re-examined. Paul G. Bretscher has studied this possibility and has concluded that the nature of the eucharistic sacrament not only allows but suggests infant communion.

2) It is possible that baptism and the Eucharist should be treated alike. W. Schenk presents a penetrating statement which suggests this second implication. He says, "Rechtfertigt man die Säuglingstaufe mit dem Säuglingsglauben (fides infantium) wie K. Brinkel, so müsste man auch die Kleinkindkommunion damit rechtfertigen..."³ The force of this statement is that one cannot justify infant baptism any more than one can justify infant communion. Schenk pursues the argument in detail and concludes that the real problem is with infant baptism.⁴

3) The final implication of the study of 1 Cor. 11:29 is that the Missouri Synod practice of confirmation and

first communion badly needs re-examination. As it exists, it cannot be based on 1 Cor. 11:17-34.

FOOTNOTES

1. Wolfgang Schenk, "Von Gebrauch 1 Kor. 11,29 in der Konfirmationsdebatte," Evangelische Theologie, 21 (1961), pp. 524-525.
2. Paul G. Bretscher, "First Things First; The Question of Infant Communion," Una Sancta, 2 (1956), pp. 34-40.
3. Schenk, p. 525.
4. Schenk, p. 526.

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