



Eating and Drinking Judgement upon ourselves...

Children and the Pauline Communities

Introduction

The challenge of reconstructing children in Paul's communities

- There are no explicit references to children per se only to adults being child-like
- Closest ref is to the young man (Eutychus) in Acts
- The challenge then is to work out implicitly what the Pauline communities' attitude to children was since we can find no explicit reference.

Early Christianity as a 'Domestic Religion'

One of the key factors of the earliest communities is that they met in people's houses

- Earliest designated building was 2nd century
- In a culture (both Jewish and Greek) in which women and children were more influential at home than in public this must be significant.
- It is highly likely that the children of the household would have been present at every meeting for 'table fellowship'
- Reconstructing the logistics of table fellowship is instructive.

In the light of this need to think again about Paul's instructions about table fellowship.

The text:

1 Corinthians 10:16-21 ¹⁶ The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a sharing in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a sharing in the body of Christ? ¹⁷ Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread. ¹⁸ Consider the people of Israel;¹ are not those who eat the sacrifices partners in the altar? ¹⁹ What do I imply then? That food sacrificed to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything? ²⁰ No, I imply that what pagans sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons and not to God. I do not want you to be partners with demons. 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.

Followed by a reflection on food offered to idols and the sensibilities of others

Then on Women and prophecy...

Followed by a return to the Lord's Supper

1 Corinthians 11:17 - 12:1 ¹⁷ Now in the following instructions I do not commend you, because when you come together it is not for the better but for the worse. ¹⁸ For, 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. ¹⁹ Indeed, there have to be factions among you, for only so will it become clear who among you are genuine. ²⁰ When you come together, it is not really to eat the Lord's supper. ²¹ For when the time comes to eat, each of you goes ahead with your own supper, and one goes hungry and another becomes drunk. ²² What! 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!

²³ For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took a loaf of bread, ²⁴ and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body that is for¹ you. Do this in remembrance of me." ²⁵ In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." ²⁶ For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

²⁷ Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be answerable for the body and blood of the Lord. ²⁸ Examine yourselves, and only then eat of the bread and drink of the cup. ²⁹ For all who eat and drink¹ without discerning the body, eat and drink judgment against themselves. ³⁰ For this reason many of you are weak and ill, and some have died. ³¹ But if we judged ourselves, we would not be judged. ³² But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined¹ so that we may not be condemned along with the world. ³³ So then, my brothers and sisters,¹ when you come together to eat, wait for one another. ³⁴ If 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.

It then goes onto 'spiritual stuff' and the way in which the 'body' relates to itself.

The Background to the Corinthian Problem

The majority consensus among scholars today is that the problem here (and indeed elsewhere in 1 Corinthians) is the disparity of wealth in the community

- The location of Corinth
- Corinth as the Roman 'new town' – destroyed in 146 BC but then rebuilt by Julius Caesar shortly before he died in 44 BC.
- A favourite place for freed slave to settle

This seems to lie behind the issues – the wealthy and poor tried to live together in the community but were unsuccessful.

What Body is Paul talking about in these passages?

The key feature is that the word body is used fluidly by Paul in these three chapters

- 10:16-21 – talks about the bread being a *koinonia* in the body and blood of Christ, i.e. a means by which we participate in the body of Christ
- This is picked up in 11.23-26 with the words of the institution – this is my body etc.
- Parallels with the theology of the Seder meal.
- But vv. 33 and onwards spin outwards to look at the community as the body of Christ

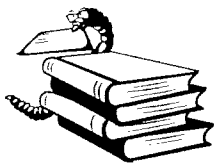
- So this raises the question of when it says ‘*For all who eat and drink¹ without discerning the body, eat and drink judgment against themselves*’ which body is it talking about?

Points to notice

- Having spoken of the bread and cup in now just says body
- It seems to pick up the theme again in vv33-34 when it is talking about the condemnation of not waiting for the members of the body.

Questions for Base Groups

- What do you think are the key features of Paul’s teaching about the Lord’s Supper?
- Do they have any bearing on our churches’ attitudes to children? (of course the answer to this may be no!)



For Further Reading

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