

**FOOD OFFERED TO IDOLS IN  
1 CORINTHIANS 8-10:  
A STUDY OF CONFLICTING  
VIEWPOINTS IN THE SETTING OF  
RELIGIOUS PLURALISM IN CORINTH**

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates the conflict which existed in Corinth around the mid-first century C.E. concerning Christian involvement in cultic meals. Following a brief introduction, the state of scholarship is surveyed in Chapter 1 and it becomes apparent that the general emphasis has been either on detailed exegesis of Paul's teaching in 1 Cor.8-10 or on Greek /Oriental cultic meal evidence from Classical and Hellenistic times. Little attention has been paid to the actual nature and dynamics of the sacrificial food issue itself or to the Corinthians' own perceptions of such cultic events.

Chapter Two deals with a contemporary case study of cultic meals among the Torajanese people of South Sulawesi, Indonesia. Using literary evidence and detailed oral interviews, it emerges that among Christians, there exists a wide range of individual viewpoints regarding the nature and perceived significance of images, sacrifices and communal meals. This spectrum of opinion finds its root in the existence of genuine ambiguities, boundary definition problems and conceptual differences regarding the nature of divinity and humanity. The result has been the emergence of a large number of different perspectives on the validity of Christian attendance at, and participation in, such cultic festivals.

In Chapter Three, archaeological evidence and reports are assessed in order to suggest which cults were operative in mid first century C.E. Corinth and which might therefore have been the objects of Paul's attention in 1 Cor.8-10. The unresolved issue of Greek/Roman continuity is considered.

Chapter Four and Five present detailed primary source materials concerning images, sacrifices and communal meals, with emphasis on the cults of Demeter/Kore, Asclepius, Isis/Sarapis, cults of the dead and with special attention being given to Imperial Cult. Study of cultic terminology, cultic practice and the perceived significance of cultic phenomena yields evidence of ambiguities, boundary delimitation issues and conceptual variations regarding the natures of the divine and the human.

Finally in Chapter Six, detailed exegesis of sections of 1 Cor.8-10 takes account of this Greco-Roman background research. The unity of 1 Cor.8-10 is defended, but the long-held hypotheses of Gnosticism and Sacramental Communion are criticized. The issue of sacrificial food was complicated and triggered a broad range of genuine individual perspectives. Confronted by such a complex dilemma, involving valid viewpoints on all sides, the apostle deals firmly with the issue of eating in 8:1-13 but sets his clearest boundary marker in 10:14-22 where he forbids involvement by believers in actual pagan sacrificial acts. These two sections of the text are thus in basic harmony, and are not in conflict. The plethora of feasible individual interpretations and viewpoints compels Paul to dwell continuously on general principles which are designed to lead his readers away from entrenched individual positions and towards concern for the Christian community. The complex dynamic of sacrificial food, and the consequent controversy involved in trying to define 'idolatry', makes it an ongoing, and largely intractable, problem for many churches today.

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Above all, my thanks go to the God who alone made this venture possible by His continual supply of the needed grace and strength, and by His faithful provision of our every need.

## ILLUSTRATIONS

**Fig. 1** From an unsigned amphora by the chief painter of the factory of Andokides. (6th - 5th Cent. B.C.E.) Herakles feasting with Athena, complete with couch and table. (Munich, Museum antiker Kleinkunst)

*Source:* Ernst Pfuhl *Masterpieces of Greek Drawing and Painting* Translated by J.D. Beazley. London: Chatto and Windus, 1926 Fig. 28 p.18 and note on p.34.

**Fig. 2** Three figures most probably proceeding to a sacrifice, prior to a banquet, and equipped with tray, bundle (probably containing faggots), axe, knife and a stunned or dead boar.

This drawing is from the vase-painting of which the original vase is in S. Agata di Goti, Benevento Province.

*Source:* E. Gerhard, *Antike Bildwerke* (Munich 1828) pl.70.

**Fig.3A** Preserved lower half of 'hero-relief' of the funeral-banquet type, found at Corinth.

*Source:* F.P. Johnson *Corinth Vol. IX Sculpture 1896-1923 ASCSA 1931* p.126 No.263.

**Fig.3B** Dr. A. Raubitschek has drawn the hero-relief of Fig. 3A and restored the missing part by reference to a similar relief (early 3rd Century B.C.E.), now in the Museum at Istanbul and originating in the Dodecanese Islands. (E. Pfuhl, *Jahrbuch*, L, 1935, p.57, Fig.19). The most common feature, apart from the reclining male and seated female, is the snake rearing up beneath the table, representing, according to a scholarly consensus, the soul of the dead (or perhaps a healing power). Such ceremonies were viewed as having an underworld, chthonic context. The reclining male is most probably a divine figure, though some favour a hero or heroized dead person.

*Source:* O. Broneer "Hero Cults in the Corinthian Agora" in *Hesperia* 11 (1942) esp. pp.130-5.



FIG.1



FIG.2

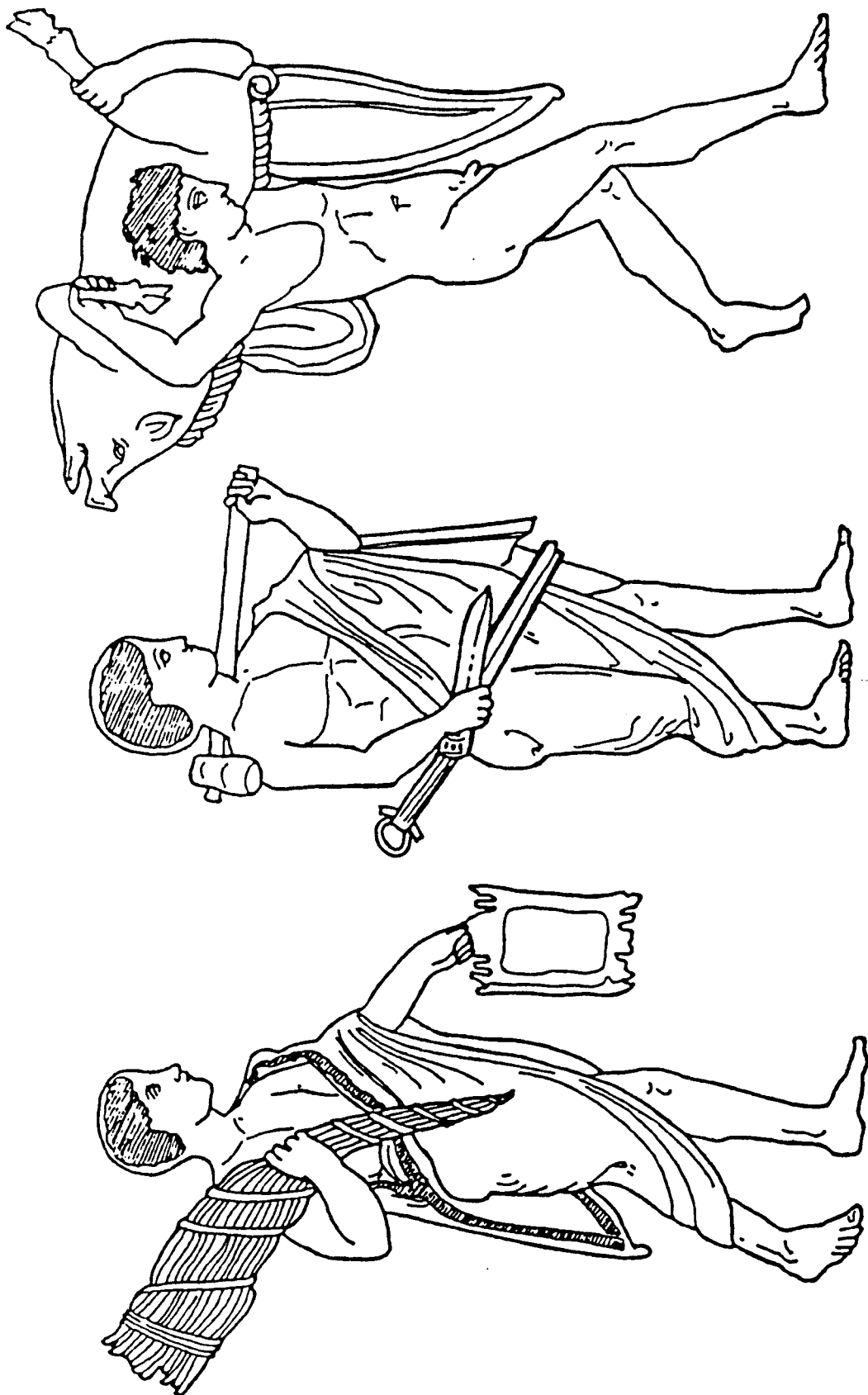
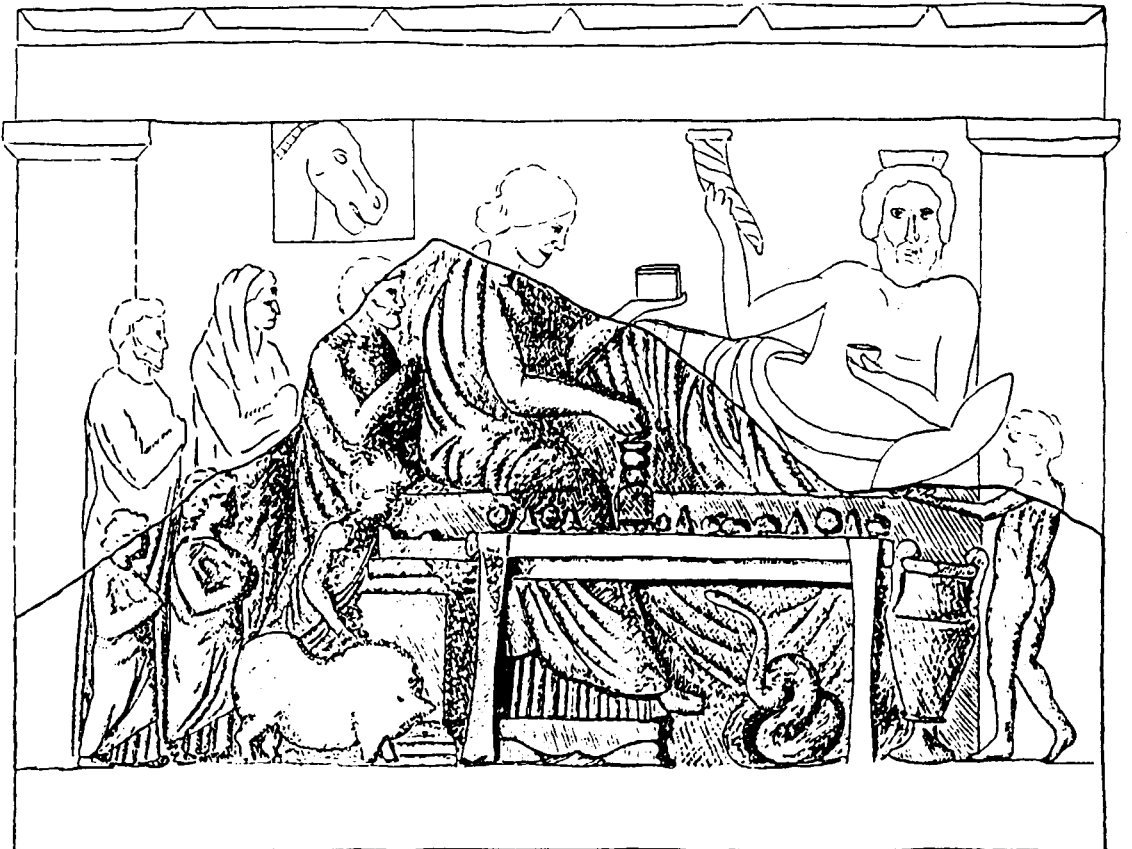




FIG. 3A

FIG. 3B



The refinement of our historical sense chiefly means that we keep it properly complicated. History, like science and art, involves abstraction: we abstract certain events from others and we make this particular abstraction with an end in view, we make it to serve some purpose of our will. Try as we may, we cannot, as we write history, escape our purposiveness. Nor, indeed, should we try to escape, for purpose and meaning are the same thing. But in pursuing our purpose, in making our abstractions, we must be aware of what we are doing; we ought to have it fully in mind that our abstraction is not perfectly equivalent to the infinite complication of events from which we have abstracted. I should like to suggest a few ways in which those of us who are literary scholars can give our notion of history an appropriate complication.

Lionel Trilling, *The Sense of the Past* (1970), p.194.

Some words from *Shades of Grey* - a song produced by Billy Joel, the essence of which has significance for viewing cultic meals -

Some things were perfectly clear,  
seen with the vision of youth,  
No doubts and nothing to fear,  
I claimed the corner on truth.

.... Shades of grey wherever I go  
The more I find out the less that I know  
Black and white is how it should be  
But shades of grey are the colors I see.

It almost seems as if these images [holy Catholic pictures] had just lived, and as if their living existence had simply been accepted without question and without reflection, much as everyone decorates Christmas trees and hides Easter eggs without ever knowing what these customs mean. The fact is that archetypal images are so significant in themselves that people never think of asking what they mean. That the gods die from time to time is due to man's discovery that they do not mean anything, that they are good-for-nothings made by human hands, fashioned out of wood and stone. In reality, man has thus discovered only this: that up till then he had not achieved one thought concerning these images.

Context: The iconoclasm of the Reformation. Carl G. Jung *The Integration of the Personality* Translated from German by Stanley M. Dell. Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner Co. Ltd., London 1940 p.60.

Some words written by Matthew Arnold to Grant Duff on August 22nd 1879, in the context of change in the realm of religious phenomena -

But I more and more learn the  
 extreme slowness of things; and  
 that, though we are all disposed to  
 think that everything will change  
 in our lifetime, it will not.

*Letters of Matthew Arnold Vol. II 1848-88* Collected and Arranged by George W.E. Russell, MacMillan & Co. Ltd., London 1901 p.187.

## ABBREVIATIONS

AJA	American Journal of Archaeology
ANRW	<i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt</i> (ed. H. Temporini, W. Haase, 1972-).
ASCSA	American School of Classical Studies at Athens
ATR	<i>Anglican Theological Review</i>
BAG	A Greek-English Lexicon of the N.T. (eds. W. Bauer, W.F. Arndt and F.W. Gingrich)
BCH	<i>Bulletin de Correspondance Hellénique</i>
<i>Bib. Arch. Rev.</i>	<i>Biblical Archaeology Review</i>
BMC	<i>A Catalogue of Sculpture in the Dept. of Greek and Roman Antiquities, British Museum. I-III</i> (ed. A.H. Smith 1892-1904)
CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CIL	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum</i> (ed. Th. Mommsen et al, 1863-)
ERE	<i>Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics</i>
<i>Ev.Q.</i>	<i>Evangelical Quarterly</i>
HTR	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
ICC	International Critical Commentary
IG	<i>Inscriptiones Graecae I-XIV</i> (1873-)
IGR	<i>Inscriptiones Graecae ad Res Romanas Pertinentes I-IV</i> (ed. R. Cagnat et al., 1906-27)
ILS	<i>Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae I-III</i> (ed. H. Dessau, 1892-1916)
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JHS	<i>Journal of Hellenic Studies</i>
<i>J.R. Arch.</i>	<i>Journal of Roman Archaeology</i>
JRS	<i>Journal of Roman Studies</i>
JSNT	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>

<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
<i>LSAM</i>	<i>Lois Sacrées de L'Asie Mineure</i> (F. Sokolowski, 1955)
<i>LSCG</i>	<i>Lois Sacrées des Cités Grecques</i> (F. Sokolowski, 1969)
<i>LSCG Supp.</i>	<i>Lois Sacrées des Cités Grecques, Supplement</i> (F. Sokolowski, 1962)
NEB	New English Bible
NIV	New International Version
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
<i>NTS</i>	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
<i>Nov. Test.</i>	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
<i>OCD</i>	<i>Oxford Classical Dictionary</i>
<i>OGIS</i>	<i>Orientis Graecae Inscriptiones Selectae I-II</i> (ed. W. Dittenberger, 1903-5)
<i>P. Oxy</i>	<i>Oxyrhynchus Papyri</i> (1898-)
REB	Revised English Bible
RSV	Revised Standard Version
RV	Revised Version
<i>SEG</i>	<i>Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecarum</i> (ed. J.J.E. Hondius et al., 1923-)
<i>SIG</i>	<i>Sylloge Inscriptionum Graecarum I-IV</i> (3rd Ed.) (ed. W. Dittenberger et al., 1915-24)
<i>TDNT</i>	<i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i>
<i>ZNTW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>

N.B. Unless otherwise stated, English renderings of the biblical text are taken from the Revised Standard Version, and quotations from the Greek N.T. are from the UBS Third Corrected Edition.

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## INTRODUCTION

This thesis will argue that the essential problem confronted by 1 Corinthians 8-10 was the challenge of defining and delimiting 'idolatrous worship'. The question of Christian involvement in cultic festivals was not a simple one, but was complex and multi-dimensional. If we are to achieve a picture of the complicated dynamics of this problem, then it will not be sufficient simply to exegete Paul's viewpoint and teaching as revealed in 1 Cor.8-10. The problem did not suddenly begin in those chapters, for even in 1 Cor.5:9-13, there are clear indications that a misunderstanding had already developed between Paul and the Corinthians concerning involvement in idolatry. The strong language of 1 Cor.8-10 reflects a situation of verbal conflict and combat over idolatry and the possibility of genuine or intentional misunderstanding in such an atmosphere of communication cannot be too readily discounted in view of what is recorded in 1 Cor.5:9-13. We shall argue that cultic belief and practice in first century C.E. Corinth involved a wide range of ambiguities, boundary definition difficulties and conceptual differences. The result was a wide spectrum of viewpoints such that differences of opinion existed not only, as some scholars argue, between factions within the church, nor only as others contend, between the Corinthians and Paul, but in fact in all directions. The root problem was not that one 'party' was right or wrong, but that a great range of possible and viable individual interpretations existed on the issue of Christian involvement in cultic meals. The elements of cultic festivals, namely images, sacrifices and communal meals, were each capable of multiple interpretation. Clearly, some in Corinth were arguing for continued participation in feasts and of course the apostle Paul had already encouraged ongoing relations between Christians and unbelievers (1 Cor.5:9-13). We shall argue that our research into the Greco-Roman background sheds new light on at least three textual areas which have divided scholars over many years -

1. We argue that the sheer complexity of the issue of Christian involvement in cultic festivals was known to Paul and that the whole church in Corinth represented its multiple views to Paul, probably in the form of a letter. A wide range of positions was held within the church and this helps us to see why Paul's opening statement in 1 Cor.8:1 declares "Now, concerning food offered to idols, we know that we all have knowledge." Paul recognises the broad spectrum of reasonable positions in the Corinthian Church. Each person had claimed to have knowledge about the nature and significance of the ingredients of cultic festivals and the extent to which their involvement in those feasts could be justified. After all, the Corinthians' involvement in cultic feasts had been their 'meat and drink' since the cradle. Their knowledge of such things was 'insider knowledge', whereas Paul's was 'outsider knowledge'. We contend therefore that it is unnecessary to argue for either 'spiritual gifts' or for 'Gnostic insight' as ways of understanding 'knowledge' in 1 Cor.8. Indeed, we believe that Gnosticism, a fully blown phenomenon of the second, not

first, century C.E., is a 'red herring' in the context of 1 Cor.8-10 and has caused a large amount of unnecessary ink to be expended.

2. The existence of real ambiguities, boundary definition problems and conceptual differences in the minds of individuals meant that issues of Christian involvement in cultic festivals could not be settled on the basis of knowledge alone. The different individual interpretations were too numerous to allow that possibility. Questions about images, sacrifices and communal meals could be answered in a wide variety of ways - the scope for individual interpretation was great. In this situation, we argue, Paul knew that these issues could not be settled on the basis of so-called 'knowledge' which varied from person to person. In this highly complex state of affairs with its range of 'knowledge' and its veritable wealth of individual interpretation, Paul knew that his only chance of tackling the idol-food issue in any meaningful way was by lifting the argument out of the minefield of individual interpretation and bringing in a series of arguments which drew people's attention from individual to communal considerations. Hence, for example, 'knowledge' must be superseded by love and individual self-interest must be set aside for the sake of others and of the whole Body of Christ. Paul elevates concern for the Gospel above all else in a situation which was unresolvable in any other way because of the proliferation of individual interpretations and arguments. We cannot assume that the Corinthians held the same concepts and boundaries as Paul with regard to such concepts as idolatry, worship and Christianity. Indeed we argue that different people defined these concepts differently and that this was the reason fundamentally why Paul had one enormous problem on his hands. There were no simple answers. There was no single black-and-white solution to the issue of idol-food in Corinth - at least no solution that would satisfy the whole church. On the level of individual interpretations of cultic festivals, Paul knew that he would not be able to satisfy everyone. Thus he devotes relatively little space to actual cultic practice in 1 Cor.8-10. Rather does he lift the argument repeatedly and in different ways from the individual to the communal, from knowledge to the principle of love and from self-interest to interest in the whole Body of Christ. It is the impossibility of walking through the minefield of individual interpretation which sets Paul's course throughout 1 Cor.8-10 and which makes sense also of the integral place and contribution of 1 Cor.9 within these chapters. The existence of so many apparently valid and feasible viewpoints taken up by Corinthian believers left Paul little option but to shift the focus of the problem and to make the Gospel a fixed and controlling point of reference. Paul thus calls the Corinthians as a whole to set priority on their relationship to God and to other believers. The Corinthians need to take account of the viewpoints of others and not simply cling to their own entrenched and cherished perspectives regarding sacrificial food.

3. As well as employing a number of communal arguments, we argue that Paul did attempt to give specific directives regarding Christian involvement in cultic festivals. Scholars have long been divided over the issue of whether or not Paul contradicts himself between 1 Cor.8 and 1 Cor.10:14-22, apparently allowing temple-dining in the former but strongly forbidding it in the latter. We argue that throughout 1 Cor.8-10, Paul comes across as being consistently opposed to Christians who attend, eat food at, and get involved in the sacrificial offerings of, temple festivals. In Chapter 8 Paul agrees that 'idols' - by which he means 'other gods' - do not exist, but in 10:14-22 he affirms that demons nevertheless are very real. It is thus insufficient for the Corinthians merely to have 'knowledge' about the one God - they must rather be known by, and in relationship with, that God. Even so, we shall need to take account of possible divergence between Paul and the Corinthians, when it comes to conceptual understandings of terms such as 'idols' and 'demons'. We shall argue that this indeed was part of the problem. The main thrust of our thesis regarding the apparent conflict between 1 Cor.8 and 1 Cor.10:14-22 is not that the two passages belong to different letters or that they reflect a change in Paul's thinking or that one reflects non-cultic while the other, cultic contexts, but rather that the two sections deal with different degrees of involvement in cultic festivals. In 1 Cor.8 Paul is concerned with activities which some Christians are *now* involved in, namely attending temple feasts and eating the food. In 1 Cor.10:14-22, however, Paul moves a stage further and records what *other* people ('pagans') are doing now, namely making actual sacrificial offerings. If Christians are not careful, they could be dragged into a position, or even voluntarily enter the arena, in which they would actively be involved in participation in the act of sacrifice. We argue that Paul does not give the Corinthians complete freedom in Chapter 8 to be involved in temple feasts and then suddenly turn round and ban it in 10:14-22. Thus we believe that 1 Cor.10 is a logical development, and climax, of the argument which began in Chapter 8 and which runs consistently through Chapter 9. Indeed we shall suggest that the sequence of arguments is related not only to differences in degree of Christian involvement in cultic festivals but also reflects Paul's rhetorical style, skill and purpose. Scholars are divided, for example, over the function of Chapter 9, whether an apostolic defence against attacks or Paul's personal example of his willingness to surrender his rights. We suggest that the latter was the case but that Paul was also cunningly asserting his apostolic authority so as to strengthen his case, in preparation for possible further Corinthian objections. Paul communicates, we propose, as many Asians do. He builds up his argument by stages through a series of strategic moves - concern for the weak and the church (8:7-13); subtle portrayal of his authority as apostle alongside his own humility in setting aside apostolic rights (9:1-15); the supreme priority of the Gospel (9:16-27); the authority of Scripture. (10:1-13). Paul is then ready to strike hard in 10:14-22, before winding down and softening his attack through 10:23-30, and finally closing in general appeals and exhortations that would be difficult for anyone to argue with.



# CHAPTER ONE

## GENERAL SURVEY OF SCHOLARLY APPROACHES TO 1 COR. 8-10

### 1.1 INITIAL RESEARCH

The first major contribution to the current scholarly debate on 1 Cor.8-10 can be dated in 1968 with the completion of W.T. Sawyer's work.<sup>1</sup> In a very broad-ranging survey, Sawyer argues that the 'weak' were mostly over-scrupulous Jewish Christians, whilst the 'strong' were Gentiles influenced by incipient Gnosticism. In his attempt to relate the 'idol-food' issue to the total context of Paul's ministry, however, Sawyer tends to skate over background issues, arguing for example that the likely location of the market in Corinth near several temples meant that the sacrificial meat could easily be moved from temple to market. Admittedly Sawyer speaks only of "the possibility" (1968:73) that much of the market meat was sacrificial, based on the short distance between temple and market, but we need to beware lest we infer that the location *per se* guaranteed a flow of meat. In the course of his work, Sawyer points out three of the areas which invite the research that we shall attempt:

1. The existence of communal meals "raises the more difficult question of the meaning of both the sacrifice and the meal itself." (1968:83).
2. "... the exact relationship to the deity in these meals is open to question." (1968:102).
3. Sawyer notes the multi-dimensional nature of the idol meat problem and concludes that "it is difficult, if not impossible, to compartmentalise life into religious, economic, and social areas, for there is an inevitable overlapping of these categories, especially in the ancient world." (1968:88).

In spite of Sawyer's early recognition of these major gaps in scholarship, an increasing flow of articles, monographs and dissertations throughout the 1980's has thus far failed to fill those gaps in research. Judging by current output, 1 Cor.8-10 remains the least considered section of Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians. Nevertheless we shall briefly consider the broad outlines of work produced in the 1980's and 1990's, reserving till later more detailed reference to the findings of various scholars. We shall thus point to the major approaches thus far taken to 1 Cor.8-10 and attempt to evaluate such lines of enquiry, noting at the same time some avenues of research which invite our attention.

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<sup>1</sup> W.T. Sawyer *The Problem of Meat Sacrificed to Idols in the Corinthian Church*. Doctor of Theology Dissertation, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, USA, May 1968.

## 1.2 MAIN LINES OF ENQUIRY IN THE 1980's AND 1990's

Whilst some degree of overlap is inevitable, we shall present research findings under a number of broad methodological headings.

### 1.2.1 CULTURAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL APPROACHES

(a) Robert Lisle *The Cults of Corinth* PhD Diss. 1955.

Using Pausanias' account as a framework, Lisle made an early attempt at a description and synthesis of the archaeological work done at Corinth. He recognised the paucity of epigraphical evidence, yet his accumulated archaeological material did point out some significant features - that there appears to have been a history of chthonic associations with the worlds of the dead and heroes, that the survival of wooden images of Herakles and Athena Chalinitis well into the second century C.E. may indeed suggest that those images were protected and thus that the site was not totally deserted between 146 B.C.E. and 44 B.C.E., and finally that great caution needs to be exercised in any attempt to date Corinthian cults, let alone to discern the nature and practice of those cults. (1955:2 and 32).

(b) Dennis E. Smith *Social Obligation in the Context of Communal Meals*. Harvard 1980.

Smith opened his work on Greco-Roman formal meals with the admission that "much of the evidence is only fragmentary and is of doubtful value for reconstructing a set of customs for an entire culture. Nevertheless in many cases it is the only evidence we have." (1980:4) His research concluded that ritual meals, whether of Greeks or of Romans, tended to take on a standardised form, the variation occurring with respect to the interpretations given to those forms in their different contexts. Smith followed the general scholarly consensus that meat was only really available to the populace on festive, sacrificial occasions. He also came to the position that most Greek and Roman clubs functioned primarily "as social organisations". (1980:117) Critical of what he calls Theissen's failure to make a convincing correlation between intellectual elitism and economic elitism in identifying the wealthy with the 'strong' in 1 Cor.8 and 10:23 - 11:1, nevertheless Smith himself rather dogmatically claims that the weak conscience in 10:27-28 belongs to the host and that the host is a member of the upper class. (1980:194 n.33).

(c) W.C.W. Foss *Cult Meals in Early Christianity and the Contemporary Paganism of the Greco-Roman World*. MA Thesis.1987.

The work of Foss is one which again recognises the difficulties of researching this subject area, for with respect to the function of sacrificial meals, he admits that "lack of definitions or explanations of terms is a general problem in studying cult-meals." (1987:4). The broad-ranging study of cult-meals which Foss attempted led him to make a basic

distinction between day-time *thusiai* to the Olympian gods and night-time *enagismata* to underworld deities, heroes and the dead. However, he quickly qualified this by noting that these terms were not in fact strictly limited to particular divine categories and that even within the chthonic category, it was very difficult to distinguish between rites for the dead and those for heroes. Foss makes an important distinction and contrast in principle between 'sacramental' meals in which the divinity was consumed and convivial meals in which gods could be conceived as table-fellows. He finds no evidence for the former category. Finally Foss opens up at least the possibility of feasts for heroes and the dead in Corinth by his assertion that "... there is no lack of references [especially in Pausanias] to sacrifices to the dead or to heroes belonging more to the *thusia* type of offering with mortals becoming, as it were, table fellows with them." (1987:38).

## 1.2.2 EXEGETICAL STUDIES

- (a) W.H. Lawson *First Corinthians 9:24 - 10:22 in its Contextual Framework* PhD 1984.

Lawson seeks to show how Paul regulated Christian behaviour and tried to place limits on Christian freedom. He contends that in 1 Cor.9 Paul is defending himself against Corinthian challenges to his position. (1984:47). It is the brevity of his background study, however, which weakens Lawson's work and causes him to make unsubstantiated, vague or dogmatic statements such as "Apparently there was a great deal of social stratification" (1984:9); "This invitation [1 Cor.10:27-30] is necessarily to a banquet at the home of the pagan friend" (1984:39); "A weak Christian might conceivably justify attendance at the temple for a purely social occasion. His attendance at the temple for a cultic celebration, however, is rather unlikely." (1984: 40).

- (b) P. Rainbow *Monotheism and Christology in 1 Cor.8:4-6* Oxford, D.Phil. 1987.

The aim of this work is to show that Paul as a Christian continued to use a number of traditional Jewish forms of monotheistic speech when referring to God. Central to Paul's entire thinking, argues Rainbow, was the unity of God. (1987: 109). Yet Jewish sources also indicate belief in supernatural beings. He notes the highly significant phenomenon that in ancient times, the word 'god', under the influence of polytheism had a broader referential range than it has today. (1987:56). Thus ancient Jewish monotheists could speak of "many gods as existing under the one God" (1987:54), even though in the context of 1 Cor. 8:5, such 'gods' are not truly divine. Although Rainbow merely lists divinities and cults (Appendix 2 pp.287ff) and does not tackle the full-orbed issues of 1 Cor.8-10, nevertheless he does note the significance of Imperial Cult in mid-first Century C.E. Corinth (1987: 290) and points in the direction of the need to consider the nature and boundaries of 'gods', 'idolatry' and 'worship'.

(c) P.D. Gardner *The Gifts of God and the Authentication of a Christian*. PhD. 1989.

Whilst we have a measure of understanding of, and sympathy towards, Gardner's desire to tackle the text of 1 Cor.8-10 "without a prior commitment to a particular 'background'" (1989:12), nevertheless we contend that background study is essential in any attempt to grapple with the multi-dimensional nature of the idol-food issue. Gardner holds to the unity of 1 Cor.8-10, denying the need for source-critical reconstructions, but he builds his major thesis on the questionable view that both Paul and the Corinthians used the word 'knowledge' to describe a particular gift of the Spirit. Some Corinthians thus ate idol meat to prove that they possessed this gift and that this knowledge, rather than love, authenticated their membership of the Christian community.

Over the years several other scholars have carried out exegetical work on the text of 1 Cor.8-10. Johannes Weiss<sup>2</sup> set the scene for much of later scholarship by asserting that there were two groups in the Corinthian Church. However, he believes that Paul intervened in two different ways - 1 Cor.10:1-22 attacks idolatry and belongs to the previous letter referred to in 1 Cor.5:9-13, whilst Chapter 8 and 10:23 - 11:1 view eating itself as morally indifferent and as such represent Paul's later view on the whole subject (1910:264). Thus Weiss, along with others, has used a letter partition theory to deal with the apparent tension and conflict between 1 Cor.8 and 1 Cor.10:1-22. We shall return to this issue at varying stages of this research.

In 1965 J.C. Hurd Jr.<sup>3</sup> picked up the challenge of 1 Cor.8-10, arguing that 1 Cor. continues Paul's initial attempt in his previous letter to impose the conditions of the Apostolic Decree (Acts 15) on the Corinthians. The text of 1 Cor., however, indicates no explicit evidence of this.

Writing three years later, C.K. Barrett<sup>4</sup> contended that the basic problem in Corinth lay in a conflict between Jewish Christians who urged abstinence from idol-food and Gentile believers who ate on the basis of knowledge of the non-existence of idols. He had already stated this view in a previous article,<sup>5</sup> but there appears to be no decisive evidence that Jewish Christians were the trigger for the problem.

Like Barrett, J. Murphy O'Connor<sup>6</sup> views Paul as a mediator between the 'strong' and the 'weak' but argues that the 'weak' took an aggressive stand in relation to the 'strong'. Murphy O'Connor believes, in contradiction to Hurd, that the 'weak' actually existed in Corinth but his overall argument unfortunately fails to take account of 1 Cor.10:1-22.

<sup>2</sup> Johannes Weiss *Der Erste Korintherbrief*, 1910.

<sup>3</sup> J.C. Hurd Jr. *The Origin of 1 Corinthians*, 1965.

<sup>4</sup> C.K. Barrett *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 1968.

<sup>5</sup> C.K. Barrett "Things sacrificed to Idols" in *NTS* 11 (1964-5) pp.138-53.

<sup>6</sup> J. Murphy O'Connor "Freedom or the Ghetto? (1 Cor.8:1-13; 10:23-11:1.)" in *Revue Biblique* 85 (1978) pp.543-74.

### 1.2.3 RHETORICAL ANALYSIS

- (a) B.R. Magee *A Rhetorical Analysis of First Corinthians 8:1 - 11:1 and Romans 14:1 - 15:13*. 1988.

Magee's main thrust is that the Corinthians had failed to understand or accept Paul's version of the Gospel. The apostle thus used rhetorical techniques to substitute *his* version of the gospel for theirs. (1988:13). Magee helpfully points out the need to emphasise sentences and contexts rather than individual words (1988:31) as conveyors of concepts and reminds us that the primary intention of Paul's letters was for public reading to his congregations and thus for linear reception of information, rather than for close literary study and analysis. (1988:53). Magee makes mention of the paucity of Corinthian background evidence and feels resigned to seek evidence only in the Pauline letters themselves. (1988:137). Nevertheless Magee does recognise areas which compel some attempt to dig into background. For example he feels that Paul's response in 1 Cor. was probably less confusing to the Corinthians than to modern scholars "because the Corinthians knew their side of the discussion." (1988:136). Magee admits that "Paul had to address cultural barriers that could separate him from his audience" (1988:49) and that Paul and his readers "often had different attitudes and presuppositions, which could lead to miscommunication" (1988:12). Ultimately, to speak of "the distinct nature of Christianity" (1988:104), as Magee does, is to beg the questions "What *was* the 'distinct nature of Christianity' in 55 C.E. Corinth? On what basis was it defined and on whose authority?"

- (b) Khiok-Khng Yeo *Rhetorical Interaction in 1 Corinthians 8 and 10: A Formal Analysis with Preliminary Suggestions for a Chinese, Cross Cultural Hermeneutic*. E.J. Brill, Leiden. 1995.

Yeo is yet another scholar who struggles with the apparent discrepancy "between the absolute prohibition of Paul in 1 Cor.10:1-22 and the seemingly compromising attitude in 1 Cor.8 and 10:23-31 concerning idol worship." (1995:80). Unfortunately Yeo resorts to a complex letter partition theory in which the Corinthian Correspondence is based on six separate letters (1995:80) and he also believes that the 'strong' held a proto-Gnostic theology of Hellenistic Jewish Philonic type. (1995:130). Yeo concludes that 1 Cor.10:1-22 represents Paul's first attempt to tackle the idol meat issue and that 1 Cor.8 & 10:23 - 11:1 is a later effort from the apostle to open up a dialogue between the 'weak' and 'the strong'. (1995:209).

### 1.2.4 BACKGROUND AND TEXT

One of the pioneers in the realm of sociological analysis of the Corinthian Correspondence was Gerd Theissen, followed with varying emphases by a number of research scholars whose work will now be highlighted briefly.

- (a) Gerd Theissen "The Strong and the Weak in Corinth: A Sociological Analysis of a Theological Quarrel" In *The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity. Essays on Corinth by Gerd Theissen*. Trans. John H. Schutz, 121-44 Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982.

Theissen argues that the quarrel in Corinth was between the upper social strata who ate meat on a regular daily basis and the lower social group who ate meat rarely and exclusively on religious occasions. (1982:128) Such a distinction, however, is in itself questionable as will be seen later, and furthermore, Theissen's tendency to social categorisation tends towards an over-simplification of what was in reality a highly complex and multi-faceted issue. We agree with Stansbury's verdict that "...Theissen's direct correlation between the Corinthian church's intellectual/moral elitists and its economic elite provides a model too rigid to fit the evidence."<sup>7</sup> Stansbury argues that the upper classes in Corinth sought to gain honour on the basis of 'knowledge' for example through eating in temples. Paul sought to reverse this by using 'love' to overcome the traditional honor/shame value system and redirect it in a way that brought edification to others. (1990:434) Stansbury in a very useful contribution to Corinthian background, makes the valid point that "certainly the early readers of Paul's letters would react to the social connotations of 'shame' before making any theological connections. This illustrates how great the cultural barrier is which separates us from understanding first century texts and history. Certainly we cannot presume that theological preoccupations about sinners standing guilty or innocent before the deity stood foremost in the minds of early Christian converts." (1990:419)

- (b) Wendell Lee Willis *Idol Meat in Corinth: The Pauline Argument in 1 Corinthians 8 and 10*. 1985.

Willis draws on a wide selection of Greek and Egyptian cultic meal evidence but fails to consider the Roman period as such. He argues against the 'sacramental idea', namely the concept that worshippers consumed their deity who was contained, really or symbolically, in the sacrificial meat and thereby received that deity's traits or powers by union. Willis concludes that the overwhelming focus in ancient meals was on social conviviality (1985:47) but he appears in any case to ignore any thought that the 'sacramental' idea was a post-Christian construct rather than a feature of pre-Christian Greek thought. The weakness of Willis' work is that in rejecting the 'sacramental', he leans too heavily in the social direction, eliminating too readily the essentially religious nature of all meals and watering down Paul's conception of the actual reality of *daimonia*. Willis sees too clear a distinction between the 'religious' and the 'social' when he makes such a statement as "it was probably not regarded [by Corinthian Christians] as pagan worship in the various 'socials' held in temple precincts." (1985:63) Willis does in fact acknowledge

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<sup>7</sup> H. Stansbury *Corinthian Honor, Corinthian Conflict* 1990.

omissions from his own research and it is precisely these sort of issues which we propose to tackle - evidence of cultic dining in and near Corinth, terminology for sacrifices, recipient deities and the motives of those who sacrificed. In particular he does see the need to consider Corinthian conceptions and perceptions on meals, recognising that this is "both very important, and yet very difficult, to determine", (1985:17) and that these viewpoints "no doubt varied from person to person." (1985:46) Certainly we agree with Willis that new converts from paganism "would hardly have abandoned attitudes and assumptions overnight when they became Christians" (1985:213 n.213) and we contend it is an understatement to say that "...it is possible that Paul did not share the same views of these meals as did his readers in Corinth." (1985:260).

- (c) Peter D. Gooch *Food and the Limits of Community: 1 Corinthians 8-10*. PhD. 1988.

Gooch's socio-historical research attempted to recover "the concrete social situation originally addressed by 1 Corinthians 8-10." (1988:165-6) The main thrust of his thesis is that "food offered to other gods is at root and branch Paul's problem" (1988:224) and that "Paul at root urged avoidance of any food infected by non-Christian religious rite, based on his self-understanding as a Jew." (1988: Abstract p.1 and p.400f). In arguing for such a position, Gooch plays down the role of the 'weak'. Indeed he sees no clear evidence of any 'weak party' at Corinth or even of 'weak' individuals. Such a theory is surely unlikely for it would discredit Paul in the eyes of his readers who would presumably know whether or not he was 'inventing' the weak. The absence of the weak would also render pointless the whole argument of Chapter 9 about relinquishing rights for the sake of the Gospel and of others. Perhaps significantly, however, Gooch appears to pay very little attention to 1 Cor.9.

- (d) Osamu Nakahashi *Idol-Meat and Monotheism: A Study of the Church in Corinth (1 Cor.8-10)* 1992.

Like G. Fee and ourselves, Nakahashi takes the view that the crux of the problem addressed in 1 Cor.8-10 lay in the issue of eating sacrificial meat at cultic meals in pagan temples - 1 Cor.8:10 and 10:1-22 (1992:20,24). Nakahashi argues that the 'weak' held to a pyramidal conception of monotheism in which they could acclaim one God as supreme yet worship other gods, the differences between gods centring on power possessed, not on subordination. Such a viewpoint gave to all deities an individual status of God and the apparent power of idol-beings would have suggested their actual existence and powerful influence. The 'strong' meanwhile upheld polyonymous monotheism in which several gods merged into one chief. Thus although different gods were known by different names, they were nevertheless one God. (1992:85). Both versions differed from Paul's exclusive monotheism. In spite of understandably restricted argumentation from primary sources, nevertheless Nakahashi raises some crucial questions regarding Corinthian conceptions of

monotheism. It is this sphere of conflicting conceptions and viewpoints which we intend to extend and develop to encompass other facets of the complex matrix which underlies 1 Cor.8-10.

### **1.3 THE STATE OF SCHOLARSHIP AND A WAY FORWARD**

Broadly speaking, scholarship on 1 Cor.8-10 shares a common consensus regarding such issues as the limited nature of archaeological evidence, the significant social element in many ancient cultic meals and the need for further background research into such areas as continuity/discontinuity between Greek and Roman Corinth and the types, meanings and perceived significance of sacrifices and meals, plus their relationship to deity. Areas where no consensus exists include the specific identity and features of the 'weak' and 'strong', the relative weight of Jewish or Gentile influences on Paul's thought, attitudes, and understanding of the idol food issue, and the long-standing issue of the apparent conflict/inconsistency of Paul's viewpoint between 1 Cor.8 on the one hand and 1 Cor.10:1-22 on the other. Each of these issues will be considered in some detail during the course of this research.

Our contention is that the idol-food issue was in reality a multi-dimensional problem, not merely a social or economic or educational or theological one. Our approach will be through background research. Some scholars clearly have felt that background study should not set the agenda or approach to exegesis and therefore is to be avoided. Others have so emphasised the background that they have found insufficient time or space to do serious exegesis of the biblical text. Out of fear of being too complex or messy, western scholarship has sought neat categories for research findings yet many issues in the ancient world *were* complex, messy and riddled with loose ends. We need to be ready not to propose a single cause for every phenomenon. In short we need to be ready to adopt a both/and approach to phenomena, rather than always trying to employ an either/or mentality.

That which emerges even from a surface reading of the text of 1 Cor.8-10 is that conflicting viewpoints had arisen concerning food offered to idols. We contend that many western scholars have tended to emphasize, even if they do not actually align themselves with, Paul's position in 1 Cor.8-10. Insufficient attention has been given to the viewpoints of the Corinthians. All scholars recognise Paul's Jewish background and most acknowledge the essentially Gentile nature of the Corinthian Church. It is thus inadequate and unsatisfactory to imagine that since Paul and the Corinthians were now all followers of Jesus, therefore they all thought along similar lines about Christianity. Fundamentally the idol food issue was a missionary problem which forced Paul into cross-cultural communication in an attempt to define the actual nature of idolatry, worship and Christianity in Corinth. The problem of idol food arose in the pluralistic context of a very young church and mission studies show that those entering Christianity from a so-called 'pagan' religion do not generally enter with a clean break from the old religion. Even if



some pagan practices are discarded or modified relatively quickly, the old thinking and concepts continue for a considerable length of time. So-called 'mind-sets' change only slowly and previous thoughts and attitudes continue to exert a strong influence on their Christian belief and practice. Such a consideration lies at the root of this dissertation. Our aim will be to investigate what was happening at ground level during cultic meals but also to probe where possible the perceptions of those involved with regard to images, sacrifices and communal meals. This research will involve four stages before a textual exegesis can be attempted -

1. A cautious consideration of the dynamics of a contemporary case-study from the Torajanes area of modern Indonesia, in an attempt to trace patterns and factors which can then be investigated in the Corinthian context.
2. A review of the latest findings and possible significance of archaeological work in the Corinth area, particularly the evidence of the strong Roman influences.
3. The nature and perceived significance of images in the ancient world.
4. The nature and perceived significance of food at cultic sacrifices and communal meals.

The whole question of idol-food was in a real sense an area of Corinthian, not Pauline, expertise. It is for this very reason that the major thrust of this dissertation is the need to consider the past life of the Corinthians. We believe MacMullen to be correct in his critique of Adolf von Harnack's research material.<sup>8</sup> MacMullen<sup>9</sup> admires the scholarship of van Harnack's work but then expresses a very real concern -

Among its thousands of references to sources, however, I can find not one to a pagan source and hardly a line indicating the least attempt to find out what non-Christians thought and believed. Thus to ignore the prior views of converts or depict the Mission as operating on a clean slate is bound to strike an historian as very odd indeed.

The Corinthians by any standard of measurement were *recent* converts to Christianity and mission studies confirm that religious thought, beliefs and practices do not change overnight. The believers' religious background is crucial as we seek to unravel the reasons why the problem of sacrificial food was so intractable and why it dogged the church interminably. We cannot treat the Corinthian believers in the way that some commentators have tended to do, as little more than selfish and unenlightened pagan idolaters. Part of the problem may well be that western scholars are so unfamiliar with the idol food issue that they cannot relate to it in any meaningful way. Thus, for example, W.H. Lawson (1984:276) simply believes that "There is little danger of the modern church participating in meat sacrificed to idols... Sacrificing animals in honor of a pagan deity is no longer as pervasive as it was during the times of Paul's ministry in Corinth." W.G.

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<sup>8</sup> Adolf von Harnack *Mission und Ausbreitung des Christentums*, 1902.

<sup>9</sup> R. MacMullen *Paganism in the Roman Empire* 1981 p.206 n.16.

Thompson<sup>10</sup> claims that "nothing could be further from our experience today than the issue of eating meat sacrificed to pagan idols." The other tendency is to condemn the Corinthians in a whole variety of ways. Writing in the last century, W. Lock<sup>11</sup> calls the Corinthians ignorant on the basis of Paul's repeated use of 'Know ye not?' in 1 Cor. and speaks of the conceit and boasting of the Corinthian Church. A century later, Bruce Fisk<sup>12</sup> writes that the potential damage to weaker brothers explains Paul's rhetoric and argumentation "designed to make misbehaving Corinthians feel the gravity of the problem, and draw our attention to Paul's own exemplary conduct." Whilst we cannot deny the existence of a relationship between sexual acts and pagan worship, this link has certainly been over-used by some scholars as a stick with which to beat the Corinthians. Thus W.H. Lawson for example (1984: 201-2) implies that the Corinthians were driven to cultic involvement by their temptation to fornication. Such a view however involves too narrow a focus on an issue which in reality was both wide and complex. D.R. Nichols<sup>13</sup> in similar vein claims that some Corinthians were spiritually immature, were guilty of jealousy, envy and discord, and held far too high an opinion of themselves. He does concede, somewhat condescendingly, that they *were* capable of thought, but lacked awareness of their errors. Paul calls the Corinthians 'brothers' and we need to allow that there were aspects that genuinely caused idol-food to be an unclear and unresolved issue. We shall thus seek to do that which so far has not seriously been attempted, namely to listen, as far as is feasible, to the Corinthian voices on this issue. One of the few scholars to have recognized the need to hear 'the other side of the story' in polemically orientated situations is J.M.G. Barclay<sup>14</sup> who rightly argues, in the context of the necessary but difficult task of mirror-reading the Galatian dispute, that "however much we may be predisposed to *agree* with the New Testament authors' arguments, we will not *understand* their real import until we have critically reconstructed the main issues in the dispute and allowed ourselves to enter into the debate from *both* sides." That in a nutshell is the aim of our own research into the Corinthian controversy. The real challenge in this is to achieve an honest and balanced assessment as far as viewpoints are concerned, for as Barclay also accurately observes, again in the Galatian context, "Those who are inclined to admire Paul tend to portray his opponents as malicious, confused and theologically bankrupt; those who prefer to 'put Paul in his place' paint a picture of men who were sincere Christians, with admirable intentions and a strong theological case to argue." (1987: 81) Detailed background

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<sup>10</sup> W.G. Thompson "Corinthians 8:1-13" in *Interpretation* 44 (1990) p.406.

<sup>11</sup> W. Lock "1 Corinthians 8:1-9: A Suggestion" *Expositor* 6 (1897) p.70.

<sup>12</sup> B. Fisk "Eating Meat Offered to Idols" in *Trinity Journal* (1989) p.69.

<sup>13</sup> D.R. Nichols "The Problem of Two-Level Christianity at Corinth" *Pneuma Journal for Society of Pentecostal Study* 11 (1989) pp.100-5.

<sup>14</sup> J.M.G. Barclay "Mirror Reading a Polemical Letter: Galatians as a Test Case" in *JSNT* 31 (1987) p.73.

research will form the basis for textual exegesis. Even here, however, we shall need to exercise caution with regard to the available primary evidence, for as F.K. Yegül has commented, “the ancient world was generally quite reluctant to provide that kind of hard ‘clinching evidence’ we would dearly like to have.”<sup>15</sup> It is for that very reason that we accept the warning and challenge issued by Barclay, namely that “New Testament scholars need to learn to be more candid in admitting the real value of their theories, and there is a good case for establishing a sliding scale of hypotheses ranging between ‘certain’ and ‘incredible’.” (1987: 85). We shall pay close attention to two sections in particular - 1 Cor.8:1-13 and 10:14 - 11:1 - whilst remembering that Paul wrote his letter to a listening audience and that both his writing and the letter's reading took far less time than a modern PhD student's analysis of it. Awareness of this should help to avoid overkill: the missing of the wood for the trees, of the simple for the complex and of the obvious for the obscure.

In our attempt to listen to Corinthian perspectives on sacrificial food, we shall consider initially the contemporary situation of the Torajanese Churches of Indonesia. We shall carefully evaluate the factors underlying the problem in that current context and seek to understand the essential dynamic of sacrificial food in Toraja. This will help us to decide what sort of questions might then be directed towards the ancient Corinthian primary material.

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<sup>15</sup> F.K. Yegül “A Study in Architectural Iconography: ‘Kaisersaal’ and the Imperial Cult” in *The Art Bulletin* 64 (1982) p.30.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

# **A CONTEMPORARY CASE-STUDY: THE ISSUE OF CULTIC RITUAL AND COMMUNAL EATING AMONG TORAJANESE PEOPLE OF SOUTH SULAWESI, INDONESIA**

### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

The aim of this case-study, based on nine years of living and working among the Torajanese ethnic group, is not to attempt to draw direct parallels between 20th Century Toraja and 1st Century Corinth. Our contention is that the Corinthian problem of idol-food was a problem precisely because a wide range of perspectives and viewpoints existed. We turn therefore to the living example of Toraja where idol-food remains a highly controversial issue in the churches. Our aim is to seek an understanding of the dynamics of this problem and of the factors which underlie it. This, we contend will help us to know what sort of questions can usefully be addressed to Greco-Roman material and what sort of hypotheses can reasonably be tested out on this ancient evidence. The two situations are clearly separated both in time and space and do indeed display differences. For example, Christianity was new and isolated for Corinth whereas today it is a world wide movement. Christians in Corinth were in a minority - an island in a sea of Greco-Roman culture and religion. Today, the majority of Torajanese people would call themselves Christian. Thus in Corinth there was no obvious danger of Greco-Roman culture being submerged or lost, whereas today many indigenous cultures are threatened by 'Western' values, even if not 'Christian' values as such. The two situations are different, yet at the same time, profound similarities also exist and we maintain that the 1st Century Corinthian situation is far closer to 20th Century Torajanese society than it is to the major centres of 20th Century biblical scholarship in North America and Western Europe. Having said that, we shall not deny or ignore the existence of differences, we shall give due consideration to the crucial role of context and we shall offer an analysis which speaks not always of certainties but often of probabilities and possibilities. In short, we shall proceed cautiously, recognising that any patterns, lines of enquiry or hypotheses drawn from, or based on, this case-study will require substantiation and verification from concrete primary source material in the Corinthian setting itself.

### **2.2 BRIEF SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

Toraja constitutes a regency within the Republic of Indonesia, lying in the mountainous central area of the peculiarly and irregularly shaped island of Sulawesi, formerly known as the Celebes and one of the largest of Indonesia's 13,677 islands. The Sa'dan Toraja people who now occupy this region are classified by anthropologists as

proto-Malays<sup>1</sup> whose ancestors migrated to Toraja from Indo-China around 3000 B.C.E. Dutch colonial rule, lasting 350 years, terminated with the Second World War, but Dutch control over Indonesia only became established in Toraja as late as 1908.<sup>2</sup> Five years later the Dutch Reformed Church began protestant missionary work in Toraja and in 1947 the protestant community became autonomous, uniting to form the 'Gereja Toraja' ('Toraja Church'). According to this church's Synod Working Body of the 16th - 18th General Synod, its total membership rose from 50,000 in 1950 to 250,000 in 1990. Toraja's traditional religion - *Aluk To Dolo* - gradually declined in official adherence from 38% of Toraja's population in 1970 to 11.5% in 1987, according to the Torajaland Regency's Office of Statistics. Today 85% of Torajaland's population of 350,000+ record themselves as Christian (predominantly Protestant), with only 5% Muslim and barely 10% *Aluk To Dolo*. Against this massive statistical rise in Christianity, however, we shall need constantly to bear in mind Campbell's recent view<sup>3</sup> -

Despite their conversion to Christianity, the Toraja retain the form of pre-missionary ritual ... Today, most Toraja funerals, it is said, are to enhance the prestige of the deceased's descendants. At least, this is what outsiders are told. I suspect there is more to it than that. Beliefs in spirits are hard to kill.

Toraja is overwhelmingly an agricultural area of rice cultivation, but since 1970, its rugged beauty, rich cultural heritage and colourful festivals have combined to make Toraja a magnet which draws visitors not only from other parts of Indonesia but also from the so-called 'culture vulture' nations of the West. Indeed it is the influx of the latter type of tourist which has stimulated the resurgence of large, expensive and elaborate traditional cultic festivals.

Social stratification, although complex and subject to regional variations, is nevertheless a long-standing reality in Torajanese society. A four-fold caste system was widely practised from the 12th Century C.E. onwards -

1. *Tana bulaan* - the noble class who organized and led in the carrying out of Torajanese cultural customs. These were the great landlords and land owners, 10% of the population.

2. *Tana bassi* - also a noble class but functioned as assistants to the organizers of ritual, and constituted around 20% of the Torajanese people.

3. *Tana karurung* - the farmers who worked for the noble classes. These were the free people or commoners and made up 60% of the Torajanese people.

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<sup>1</sup> Stanislaus Sandarupa *Life and Death of the Toraja People*. Printed by CV Tiga Taurus, Ujung Pandang, Indonesia. May 1984 p.4.

<sup>2</sup> Hetty Nooy-Palm *The Sa'dan Toraja: A Study of Their Social Life and Religion. Vol. I Organization, Symbols and Beliefs*. Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal, Land-En Volkenkunde, Leiden, Netherlands 1979 p.9. Nooy-Palm is the leading Dutch anthropologist to have researched the Torajanese.

<sup>3</sup> D. Campbell "Life and Death in Torajaland" in *Garuda Airlines Magazine* Sept. 1993 p.8.

#### 4. *Tana Kua-Kua* - the lowest class, made up of slaves.

This severe stratification, from the earliest times, emerged as part of a creation myth in which a basic distinction was made between the powerful and the weak. (Sandarupa, 1984: 6). Thus Campbell's statement comes as no real surprise when he argues that -

Castes have been officially abolished but the levels remain a part of tradition and rituals ... Today, noblemen are still recognised among community leaders and it is at their funeral ceremonies that the largest number of animals are sacrificed. (1993: 9).

This ability of the rich, upper classes to arrange huge sacrificial festivals is noted also by Nooy-Palm (1979: 57) who expresses the ongoing significance of social class in a somewhat more blunt fashion - "The Toraja do not feel altogether at ease when they are questioned about former class divisions." (ibid. p.56) Everyone has a place at festivals but role and social status are broadly pre-determined in Torajanese myth, and in this context, Nooy-Palm points out that "until the arrival of the Dutch [early 20th Century] the Sa'dan Toraja were unfamiliar with writing ... stories, litanies and myths were transmitted orally." (1979: 13). The right and responsibility for the transmission of tradition lay firmly in the hands of the rich, powerful and priestly.

## 2.3 TRADITIONAL RELIGION IN TORAJA - *ALUK TO DOLO*

### 2.3.1 INTRODUCTION

In a recent short article, Kal Muller<sup>4</sup> makes a statement which not only helps our grasp of Torajanese religion but also helps our thinking on other pre-Christian religious settings -

Although Christian missionaries defined the Toraja word *aluk* as meaning religion, linguists say that the Toraja had no specific word for religion. Their term *Aluk To Dolo* refers to the 'wisdom of the ancestors', which was brought to earth by a great priest called *To Minaa Suloara*, and applies to a complex of traditions in which 'religion' is but one component. *Aluk To Dolo* covers a multitude of beliefs, spirits, rituals, prohibitions, technology, art ... It is a whole way of life.

Thus we see a difference between the Western Christian missionary and the so-called 'pagan' Torajanese with respect to how these groups define, and conceive of the nature of, religion. Because *Aluk To Dolo* is a whole way of life, it is indivisible. To attempt to create divisions, distinctions, compartments and boundaries between the 'cultural', the 'social' and the 'religious' is foreign to the Torajanese mind. A similar reason may underlie the difficulties Paul faced in the first century C.E. in his attempt to tackle the issues of

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<sup>4</sup> Kal Muller "Wisdom of the Ancestors" writing for *Garuda Airlines Magazine* Sept. 1993 p.8.

sacrificial food at Corinth. In seeking to present the essentials of *Aluk To Dolo* we shall deliberately use both Torajanese and Western authors, Torajanese because we are interested in the inside perspectives of those with first-hand experience of cult, but Western because it is often Westerners who, standing outside the tight social and ethnic solidarity of the Torajanese, are able to perceive and articulate issues which the Torajanese might be reluctant to expose too openly or directly, for example social class. Unless otherwise stated, all translations from Torajanese and Indonesian language materials are my own.

### 2.3.2 TOWARDS A DEFINITION OF ALUK TO DOLO

In order to begin to grasp the nature of *Aluk To Dolo*, the term itself is significant. According to L.T. Tangdilintin<sup>5</sup> *aluk* in the Torajanese language can be translated as *agama* in the Indonesian language i.e. 'religion'. He argues that it can also be translated by the Indonesian word 'aturan' which means 'regulation', 'organization', 'rule' or (religious) 'precept'.<sup>6</sup> The Torajanese word *To Dolo* is equivalent to the Indonesian '*leluhur*' which means 'forefathers' or 'ancestors'. *Aluk To Dolo* is thus the 'religion/precept of the ancestors' and was influenced by Hinduism and Confucianism. Indeed it was officially recognised by the Indonesian Government, under the category of Hinduism, in 1970. S. Sandarupa (1984: 32) significantly defines *Aluk To Dolo* as 'the ritual of the ancestor' while the anthropologist Eric Crystal<sup>7</sup> translates 'aluk' as 'ceremonies'. For the Torajanese the whole of life is controlled by the term *Aluk sola Pemali*. *Aluk* means 'religion', 'regulation' or 'appointment'; *sola* means 'and'; whilst *Pemali* is translatable as 'prohibition' or 'taboo'. The Torajanese people are bound by these fixed regulations and taboos which are believed to have been appointed, for time and eternity, in heaven, brought down to earth and then passed down from one generation to the next. Thus *aluk* broadly refers to a set of religious rituals, ceremonials and the regulations which control all the events of life for the Torajanese people.

Alongside the term *aluk*, another term must be introduced at this stage, namely the Indonesian word *adat*, which according to the Complete Dictionary (1980 - s.v.) means 'tradition', 'custom' or 'manners and customs'. Some have thus sought to distinguish between *aluk* as 'religious' and *adat* as 'cultural', but it is precisely here that we encounter an issue of fundamental importance not only for the Torajanese context but also for our

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<sup>5</sup> L.T. Tangdilintin *Toraja dan Kebudayaanannya (Toraja and its Culture)* 4th Printing. Yayasan Lepongan Bulan - Lepongan Bulan Foundation, Torajaland. 1980 p.72.

<sup>6</sup> *Kamus Lengkap Inggris-Indonesia Indonesia-Inggris*; (Complete Dictionary by Prof. Drs. S. Wojowasito and Drs. Tito Wasito W.) Hasta Publications, Bandung, Indonesia, 1980 p.33.

<sup>7</sup> Eric Crystal "A Death in the Tribe" in *Orientalisms: A Discovery of Asia and the Pacific*. (Nov. 1972) p.29.

appraisal of first century Corinth. The problem has been expressed in a nutshell in the words of an undated, but recent, report of the Toraja Church -

Dalam masyarakat Toraja, adat secara praktis tidak dapat (=sangat sulit) dipisahkan dari hal-hal yang sakral atau yang bersifat religius.

"In Torajanese Society, *adat* ('culture') in actual practice, cannot (=very difficult) be separated from things that are sacral/sacred or that have religious characteristics."

This issue will be treated briefly now and in more detail later.

### 2.3.3 ALUK AND ADAT

One long standing research scholar, Dr. F.L. Cooley, has concluded, in his book *Injil dan Adat di Maluku*, (Gospel and Culture in Maluku) that there are 3 dimensions to *adat* -

1. *Adat* law i.e. the most formal and composed type. Its function is to organise relationships and to guide and control the conduct of each member of society, so that order, justice and harmony are achieved. *Adat* law is a vital means of social control in all societies in Indonesia.
2. *Adat* obligation includes all the duties of how to behave oneself as a member of society. These ways are binding for all members and transgressions bring sanctions, although the implementation of sanctions is less strict and less formal than in *adat* law itself.
3. *Adat* custom i.e. manners and customs which create the distinctiveness of a particular society. Sanctions are more lightly enforced.

The dividing-lines between these three elements are not always clear, particularly in actual practice. In Toraja, for example, *adat* law (prohibitions) is combined with sacral law in the system of *Aluk sola pemali*. (see above). It constitutes a unity, a whole, such that *adat* is contained within *aluk*. Indeed *aluk* is *adat*. According to the Toraja Dictionary definition,<sup>8</sup> *aluk* has three understandings -

1. Religion - devotion to God and gods.
2. Cultural or religious ceremony; manners and customs.
3. Behaviour; action.

Thus *adat* covers religion, belief, devotion to God and gods, ceremony, manners, customs, habits and behaviour. Yet at the same time, all of these are incorporated into the essence of the traditional Torajanese religion - *Aluk To Dolo* - in the form of that fixed set of 'regulations and taboos' mentioned previously, namely, *Aluk Sola Pemali*. According to Torajanese myth, the latter was made in heaven by *Puang Matua* - the highest divinity in *Aluk To Dolo* - and was then brought to earth by the first Torajanese, who descended

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<sup>8</sup> J. Tammu, Dr. H. Van der Veen *Toraja-Indonesia Dictionary*. Toraja Christian Education Foundation, Rantepao, Toraja, Indonesia. 1972 p.39



from heaven. *Aluk* and *adat* are thus crucial not only in terms of morality, customs and behaviour, but also in ordering mankind's relationships with creation and the universe. They encompass the totality of life and are inextricably tied together. As the Report of the Toraja Church concludes -

Dengan demikian, adat tidak lain daripada kristalisasi nilai-nilai tentang hidup yang berakar dan bersumber pada sistem kepercayaan agama suku Toraja. (*Aluk To Dolo*).

"Thus, *adat* is none other than the crystallization of values concerning the life that has its roots and source in the system of religious belief of the Toraja tribe. (= *Aluk To Dolo*)" In the Torajanese mind, 'culture' and 'religion' are not separate categories. It is to the nature of this system called *Aluk To Dolo* that we turn for a brief summary as a basis for understanding the issues of sacrificial food today.

### 2.3.4 THE COSMOLOGY OF ALUK TO DOLO

Among the half dozen authors who have written down Torajanese myth, there is broad agreement that two fundamental oppositions exist in Torajanese cosmology and ritual -

1. between upperworld and underworld, with Earth in the middle.
2. between East and West geographical directions.

In a real sense, however, Torajanese religion will disappoint any scholar who seeks a totally logical, consistent and comprehensible doctrinal systematization. Nooy Palm offers this warning (1979: 109-110) -

Yet, there is no such thing as a Toraja theology. Systematization occurs, but it is always 'ad hoc', situation-bound. Such systematizations have not been incorporated into an all-encompassing logical system.

Toraja myth claims that Heaven and Earth were formed before there were gods. Indeed three gods were produced from the marriage of heaven and earth. This 'trinity' of three gods created sun, moon and stars and then each god took control of his respective cosmic sphere.<sup>9</sup>

1. Pong Gaantikembong through a marriage line, produced *Puang Matua*, chief god of the Upperworld. The latter is the high god of the Toraja who created man and

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<sup>9</sup> This three-fold division is agreed by at least three authors - S. Sandarupa *Life and Death* 1984: 33-4; Report of Organizing Committee of House Opening Ceremony (Re-telling of Creation Myth) at Kété-Kesú, Toraja. 20th Jan. 1990 p.35; H. van der Veen *The Merok Feast of the Sa'dan Toraja*. Koninklijk Instituut Voor Taal-Land-En Volkenkunde Deel. 45. S-Gravenhage-Martinus Nijhoff. 1965 p.11.

established the first rituals. It is to this remote god that other gods - *deata* - mediate offerings and sacrifices made on earth.<sup>10</sup>

2. Pong Banggairante was responsible for the Middleworld or Earth which was a later creation of the gods and where mankind lives. It is supported today by the god Pong Tulakpadang.
3. Pong Tulakpadang lives in the Underworld and helps to keep the Earth in balance. The world of the dead is actually on earth rather than in the underworld itself.

Such a division may seem straightforward but as Nooy Palm again warns (1979: 115) "Just as no Toraja theology exists, there is no standard Toraja pantheon either. There are numerous local differences, but these do not detract from the prevailing pattern." In *Aluk To Dolo*, *Puang Matua* is the Supreme God who unifies all other gods. This god married, obtained gold and from this gold created mankind, as well as producing other gods. Various gods each control natural features and natural processes on earth, but as Nooy Palm cautions (1979: 116) "It is evident that the contrast between East and West, between Upper - and Underworld does not lead to a clear classification of the gods." The key element is that *Puang Matua* is recognised as creator of mankind and fixer of all Torajanese ritual and ceremony before this list was brought down to earth by 'Bura Langi' and 'Kembong Bura'. In particular social structure was pre-determined by *Puang Matua* or the gods.<sup>11</sup>

*Puang Matua* is thus treated by Torajanese as their Supreme God. Their second object of worship are the *deata*, the multitude of gods and goddesses who sustain and maintain creation. Other *deata*, however, are the souls of the dead and also the spirits associated with specific locations. These dead souls are ancestral semi-deities who reach that status when the death ritual is accurately completed. The dead retain power to bless or curse their living descendants. The standing of these dead souls is ambiguous, for Sandarupa (1984: 38) describes the departed soul after completion of death ritual as "Another important god." If completion of rites does not occur, then the soul can return to earth as a *bombo* ('ghost') to annoy people. No clear boundaries can be fixed for distinguishing between 'god', 'spirit', or 'soul'. Divinity and humanity are not separate categories in *Aluk To Dolo*. *Deata* can mean 'semi-divine', 'spirit' or 'the soul of someone in life'.

Within this cosmological system, mankind, born from two divine beings and thus of divine origin, aims "to return to his origins after all the ritual has been fulfilled by him and for him." (*Manusia Toraja* 1983: 2). Birth is thus the transition from the transcendent to the practical and real, whilst death is the transition from practical reality to

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<sup>10</sup> E. Crystal "Ritual of Renewal" in *Orientations: A Discovery of Asia and the Pacific*. Vol. 4 No.12 (Dec. 1973) p.26.

<sup>11</sup> Theological Institute of Toraja Church - *Manusia Toraja: Darimana, Bagaimana, Kemana?* (*Toraja Man: From Where, How, to Where?*) Theological Institute Series No.2, 1983 p.6.

the reality which is transcendent. The Toraja lifeview is thus circular but a cycle which cannot be repeated. For life and death, *Aluk sola Pemali* (regulations and taboos) are crucial and involve strong obligations to family and relatives within the *tongkonan* (family clan lineage system). The prime means of fulfilling all these obligations is through the practical outworking of ritual and it is to that subject that logically we must now turn.

## 2.4 THE RITUAL OF *ALUK TO DOLO*

It is universally recognised both in writings consulted and through interviews conducted in Toraja in 1993 that the rituals of *Aluk To Dolo* can be divided into two categories which reflect the basic East-West orientation of compass direction.

### 2.4.1 *ALUK RAMBU TUKA* or *RAMPE MATALLO*

The term *rambu tuka* means 'smoke ascending' and *rampe matallo* means 'east side'. These ceremonies are carried out by specific priests during the morning on the east or north east of houses, and the gods (*deata*) addressed are those associated with guardianship of plants, domestic animals and human life (Sandarupa 1984: 36). Although these gods of the East are viewed as the gods of life, nevertheless a note of ambiguity is stuck by two local writers<sup>12</sup> who maintain that this ritual "...is intended to ensure that the soul of the dead safeguards the lives of his descendants." The world of the dead is normally considered to be a part of Westerly orientated cultic belief and practice. Thus we can see the rightness and accuracy of the concluding comment of anthropologist Eric Crystal<sup>13</sup> - "Issues of a fundamentally ecological nature are paramount in the organisation of Toraja religious belief and ritual practice."

Space forbids a detailed description of all nine main ceremonies in this category but we note the highly significant fact that although offerings to deified dead souls strictly belong to the West-oriented rituals, nevertheless the Eastern *rambu tuka* ceremonies do include, albeit to a degree separately made within the ritual process, sacrificial offerings not only to *Puang Matua*, the chief god, and to *deata*, but also to the ancestors, some of whom are deified to *deata* level.<sup>14</sup>

### 2.4.2 *ALUK RAMBU SOLO* or *RAMPE MATAMPU*

The term *rambu solo* means 'smoke descending' and *rampe matampu* means 'west side'. This funeral ceremony of the Toraja people which occurs on the west side of houses, takes place in the afternoon towards sunset and is thus associated with ancestors, with death and with the West. It is primarily in these *rambu solo* communal feasts that the

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<sup>12</sup> L.T. Tangdilintin & M. Syafei *Toraja: An Introduction to a Unique Culture*, Lepongan Bulan Foundation, Rantepao - Ujung Pandang 1983 p.34.

<sup>13</sup> Eric Crystal "Ceremonies of the Ancestors" in *Pacific Discovery*. California Academy of Sciences. Vol. 29 No.1 (Jan./Feb. 1976) p.18.

<sup>14</sup> See L. Tangdilintin *Toraja and its Culture* 1980: 99-100 and Tangdilintin & Syafei *Toraja: An Introduction* 1983: 47-49.

Christian Church is still involved to varying degrees. Although *rambu solo* ritual in theory is directed towards departed ancestors in the West, and as such is distinct from ritual directed to gods in the East, nevertheless ambiguity does exist. For example, Eric Crystal notes ("A Death..." 1972: 30) that although

offerings to the *deata* of the land are normally carried out in the morning hours on the east side of the house [*rambu tuka*],  
nevertheless

concern for one's ancestors is paramount in Toraja religious practice. All offerings to the *deata* must include specific portions for the ancestors.

The existence of ambiguity regarding the boundary line between *deata* and departed souls is evidenced in the Report mentioned in footnote 9 which refers to a famous nobleman of Kesu village who is described in songs as "lelukur yang kadang-kadang dianggap sebagai dewa, kadang-kadang sebagai manusia" (p.29). "An ancestor who sometimes is considered as a god, sometimes as man." Thus, despite the basic two-fold ritual division between 'life feasts' and 'death feasts', nevertheless it is by no means certain that followers of *Aluk To Dolo* always make clear distinctions between the various intended recipients of their ritual - *Puang Matua*, gods (*deata*), spirits (*deata*) or souls of the dead (*deata*).

In practical terms, the aim of the *rambu solo* death ritual is to facilitate the passage of the dead soul from this world to the next. A group of experts<sup>15</sup> from the Toraja Church explain this as follows -

Tujuan hidup manusia ialah kembali ke asalnya, setelah segala ritusnya dipenuhi oleh keluarganya ... Di sana ia menjadi dewa kembali, menerima persembahan dari anak cucunya atau keturunannya dan ia pun memberkati mereka.

The purpose of mankind's life is to return to their origin, after all the rites have been carried out by their families ... there they become gods again, receive gifts/homage from their offspring/descendants and they themselves bless them.

In *Aluk To Dolo* there is a living, on-going relationship between deified ancestors and their living descendants, which helps us to understand the Study Team's finding (footnote 15) that "kepercayaan Toraja tidak mengenal tentang adanya kebangkitan sesudah mati." "Toraja belief does not know about the existence of resurrection after death." The actual means of returning the dead soul to its divine origin is through animal sacrifice. According to traditional belief, all animals and indeed all living things have souls. Also people's possessions and experiences in this life follow them to life in the Hereafter. The souls of sacrificed animals thus follow the dead soul on its journey to the afterlife and

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<sup>15</sup> *Laporan Team Peneliti Rambu Solo di Sanggala (Report of the Study Team into rambu solo in Sanggala)* Toraja Church, March 1989 p.3-4.

serve the soul there. A person is only considered truly dead at the point when ritual begins, and the size of sacrifices and duration of feasting increases in relation to the social status of the deceased. Part of the meat is offered in sacrifice but most is consumed by guests or taken home for later consumption. Dead souls are borne away on the souls of pigs and buffaloes and begin their journey to 'Puya', the 'land of souls' to the south-west beyond Toraja. For the noble class of deceased, a soul can reach deified status through completion of a special ceremonial rite a year after burial and through veneration of already-deified souls. The deified soul then blesses the surviving family on earth in return for sacrifices to the *arwah* ('soul of the dead'). Reciprocity is fundamental. Souls for whom ritual is incomplete or inaccurate may return as *bombo* - 'ghosts' - or exist as 'spirits' closely associated with the dead. Much remains unclear regarding the destiny of non-noble souls after death. Ritual thus is determined by *aluk* - religious regulations - and depends on social stratification.

Basic religious ritual thus has a social and economic component. As Crystal puts it "... ritual elicits and reinforces established patterns of authority, status and power."<sup>16</sup> The crucial motivations for holding these funeral ceremonies are the prestige gained through open demonstration<sup>17</sup> of wealth, the division of the deceased's property in relation to the number of animals brought to the funeral by the children and the payment of debts, for all animals brought to a family hosting a funeral must later be reciprocated in kind when the contributing family themselves suffer a death. Tradition, family obligation and fear of ostracism *compel* participation in this system.

Finally for high caste nobility in Toraja, wooden effigies - *tau-tau* (Torajanese) or *patung* (Indonesian) - of the deceased are made, carried about at the funeral and finally located beside the grave itself. The living descendants make regular food offerings to this effigy/image in return for blessings and prosperity granted by the deified ancestor. The actual function of the *tau-tau* is highly controversial and the official position of the Synod of the Toraja Church<sup>18</sup> is that such images "tidak dapat dibenarkan" ('cannot be justified'). The image has thus been banned on three grounds, according to the following Synod ruling -

1. "It contains the danger of syncretism (mixing together of Christian belief with the principles of other beliefs)."
2. "It projects differences in social status."
3. "It can become a *batu sandungan* ('stumbling-block') in the life of the Church membership."

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<sup>16</sup> Eric Crystal *Cooking Pot Politics: A Toraja Village Study* Published in 1974 p.119.

<sup>17</sup> See Pamela and Alfred Meyer "Life and Death in Tana Toraja" *National Geographic* Vol. 141 No. 6 (June 1972) p.800.

<sup>18</sup> Synod Decision (Ref. No. XIII/SA/XVI/1981) of the 16th General Synod of the Toraja Church, confirming the previous decision of the 12th General Synod.

The issue of effigies of the dead and of their function in Torajanese society and religion has given rise to ambiguity, inconsistency of practice and wide divergence of opinion within the churches. Yet this is true not only with regard to the *tau-tau* - 'image' - problem. The questions of 'images', 'sacrifices' and 'communal meals' in Torajanese society and church will now be examined through an analysis of the conflicting viewpoints which exist today, 80 years after the founding of the Toraja church.

## **2.5 VIEWPOINTS AMONG THE CHURCHES OF TORAJA REGARDING THE NATURE OF, AND CHRISTIAN INVOLVEMENT IN, CULTIC FESTIVALS, PARTICULARLY THE DEATH FEAST**

### **2.5.1 THE INTERVIEWS**

During the month of October 1993, I carried out an in-depth series of interviews in the twin-towns of Makale and Rantepao in Toraja. Fifteen individuals were questioned, using a 3-part list of questions. Each interviewee was questioned in one, two or three sessions, lasting a total of 3 - 6 hours for each person. The interviews were conducted in random order, each one independently of the other, and in the Indonesian language. The fifteen interviewees represent the five denominations which account for virtually all adherents of Christianity in Toraja. The following church denominations were thus represented, with the number of interviewees in brackets. The 'Gereja Toraja' ('Toraja Church') is overwhelmingly the largest church group in Toraja:

1. 'Gereja Katolik' - Catholic Church (2)
  - Mr. Petron (School Teacher) of Sangalla
  - Rev. Nathan (Catholic Priest) of Makale
2. 'Gereja Toraja' - Toraja Protestant Church (7)
  - Rev. A Rumpa of Makale (Retired Minister)
  - Rev. Duma of Makale (Retired Minister)
  - Mr. Lukas Sombolayuk of Makale (School Teacher)
  - Rev. C. Parintak of Rantepao (Principal of Rantepao Theological Seminary)
  - Rev. Lebang of Rantepao (Retired Head of Toraja Church Lay Training Institute)
  - Mr. Sarira of Rantepao (Administrator of the Synod Working Body of Toraja Church)
  - Rev. Y.K. Parantean of Rantepao (Head of Training Institute for Primary and Lower Secondary School R.E. Teachers of the Toraja Church)

3. 'Gereja Kibaid' - Kibaid Church (2)

This is a broadly Evangelical 'break-away' group from the 'Gereja Toraja'

- Rev. Bokko of Makale (Founder of the Kibaid Church and Retired Minister)
- Rev. Salipadang of Ujung Padang (Retired Minister and Former Head of General Synod of Kibaid Church)

4. 'Gereja Bethel Indonesia Injili' (Bethel Gospel Church of Indonesia) (2)

This church was formed when several hundred members left the 'Gereja Toraja' in 1992.

- Mr. Ulea Salurappa of Rantepao (Former Leading Figure in 'Gereja Toraja' and now a leader of the G.B.I.I.)
- Mr. Tangkesalu of Rantepao (As above, in addition to being a prominent businessman and hotel owner)

5. 'Gereja Pentakosta Di Indonesia' (Pentecostal Church of Indonesia) (2)

- Rev. Z.S. Kendek of Makale (Minister of Pentecostal Congregation in Makale and Teacher at Pentecostal Bible School, in RanteLemo, Toraja)
- Rev. Kadang of Nanggala (Minister of Pentecostal Congregation in Nanggala and Teacher at Pentecostal Bible School, in RanteLemo, Toraja)

The interviews carried out with these 15 individuals covered a large number of questions but can be grouped under six major concerns, and it is under these six categories that we shall attempt an analysis -

1. The 'tau-tau' ('Image')
2. The 'korban' or 'persembahan' ('Sacrificial Offering')
3. The 'pesta makan' ('Eating together')
4. Concepts of the Divine World
5. The Extent of Christian Involvement in Cultic Festivals
6. The Underlying Causes of the Differences in Viewpoint.

Those interviewed in this study represent not only the full spectrum of church denominations, but also a wide scattering of original village birth-places and an age range varying from 29 through to 75 years old. All the interviewees had received varying levels of secondary education and a number, particularly in the 30-35 age group, had followed first degree courses in various tertiary educational institutions. The questions addressed to each interviewee were as follows -

## **QUESTIONNAIRE 1                      CULTIC FEASTS ON THE GROUND AND THEIR SIGNIFICANCE FOR PARTICIPANTS**

1. Name and location of town or village.
2. Age of interviewee.
3. Sex of interviewee.
4. Occupation of interviewee.
5. Educational Level of interviewee.
6. Which ceremonies in Torajanese Culture involve offering food to idols and communal eating?
7. What form does the idol, image or effigy take?
8. What is the relationship between this idol and deity?
9. What form does the sacrifice take and what significance does the sacrifice have for worshippers? To whom or to what is the sacrifice offered?
10. Who carries out, divides, distributes and eats the food?
11. At communal meals, has all the food been sacrificed or only a part of it?
12. What is the importance/significance of communal eating?

## QUESTIONNAIRE 2      CULTIC FEASTS IN THE EYES OF THE BEHOLDER AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO THE DIVINE WORLD

1. What do you understand by a 'SPIRIT' and what part, if any, does a spirit have in feasts involving sacrifices to idols and communal eating?
2. What do you understand by a 'DEMON', and what part, if any, does a demon have in feasts involving sacrifices and communal eating?
3. What do you understand by a 'GOD', and what part, if any, does a god have in feasts involving sacrifices and communal eating?

## QUESTIONNAIRE 3      THE VIEWS OF CHRISTIANS ON CULTIC FEASTS AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO WORSHIP AND IDOLATRY.

1. List the ways in which the death festival practised by Christians differs from that practised by animists.
2. What reasons can be given in favour of Christians attending the death feast?
3. What reasons can be given against Christians attending the death feast?
4. Can the making of the image/effigy, the sacrifice or the communal eating be described in any sense as involving worship?
5. How would you define idolatry? Can a Christian's attendance at a death or other feast be described in any sense as idolatry? At what point does a death or other feast become idolatrous for a Christian?

### 2.5.2 ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

We have already noted in some detail the broad division within *Aluk To Dolo* between *rambu tuka* ceremonies involving sacrifices to the *deata/dewa-dewa* (gods) and *rambu solo* which employs sacrifices to the *roh* (spirit) or *arwah* (soul) of the dead. This two-fold distinction was accepted by all interviewees without exception. Likewise, all interviewees stated that every single ceremony of *Aluk To Dolo* involved the making of sacrificial offerings and was followed by communal eating. Viewpoints regarding the nature and significance of these ceremonies, focussing on Christian involvement in death feasts, will now be assessed. Lack of space means that only a sample of the large amount of interview material will be presented here.

#### 2.5.2.1 THE IMAGE (TAU-TAU)

Although officially banned by the Protestant Toraja Church, these *tau-tau* (effigies of the dead) nevertheless still make regular appearances at the funerals of the noble class, both *Aluk To Dolo* and Christian. A wide range of views on the nature and perceived significance of these images has always been a conclusion of writers, whether Western or Indonesian. Crystal ("A Death ..."1972: 31) noted that "principally a symbol of Toraja grandeur, the *tau-tau* is a reminder that within the cave lie the remains of an honored noble. But there is also a power within the *tau-tau*." Nooy-Palm (1979: 261) observed that, dressed in clothing and jewellery, "The effigy is more than a memorial statue as we know it, for it is thought to have a soul, the soul of the deceased." Nooy-Palm confirms that food offerings are made to the image and that in the later stages of ritual, it is believed



to have power to bless the rice harvest and the lives of descendants. Sandarupa (1984: 60) contends that in *Aluk To Dolo* the image "functions as the representative of the deceased and receptacle for the spirit", though he claims that non-noble classes also make effigies from different, but inferior, types of wood. The Study Team (see note 15) concludes likewise that the *tau-tau* "is considered as a substitute for the person who is already dead" (1989: 8) and expresses concern that this image definitely does express social class distinction. In the same vein, Tangdilintin (1980: 134) is convinced that "the *tau-tau* is considered to have a spirit in it."

When Christians were interviewed about the *tau-tau*, however, a wide range of views clearly emerged. From the Catholic Church, for example, Mr. Petron confirmed that most churches, including the Catholic, forbid the *tau-tau* because of its animistic connotations and he admitted that sometimes followers of *Aluk To Dolo* do make small offerings to the image and believe it to be indwelt by ancestors. However, he argues that most Catholics now view the image as *adat saja* ('purely cultural') and therefore acceptable. He admitted that some older Catholics, still influenced by *Aluk To Dolo* do view images of Mary and Christ as having a real presence in them. He believes however that *tau-tau* are not now involved in any sacrificial sense in Catholic funerals. We thus have an immediate indication of the ambiguity, ambivalence and uncertainty which still surrounds the image issue. Father Nathan also felt that Catholics today see the image as a symbol or representation but reject the idea of a dead soul becoming a *dewa* (god). He did however express the interesting opinion [and perhaps thereby indirectly reflected the Catholic situation] that younger Protestant ministers generally accept the image as a mere photograph whilst older church members still associate it with idol worship. Catholics in Toraja do practise a higher degree of accommodation, with regard to images, than most Torajanese churches.

The Protestant Toraja Church - by far the largest denomination in Toraja - evidenced a wide divergence of opinion, not with reference to form, for there is general agreement regarding the image's physical features, ritual accompaniments and social significance, but rather with regard to its perceived meaning and function. Our oldest interviewee, Rev. Rumpa, observed three Christian views of pagan images -

1. Some reject them totally as idolatrous, based for example on the teaching of the Ten Commandments.
2. Some say that if there is no actual ritual sacrifice, then the *tau-tau* is not actually being worshipped and thus constitutes art e.g. a photograph.
3. Some say that the *tau-tau* is nevertheless a 'stumbling block' because only rich nobility can effectively use it and this creates social divisiveness in the church. This latter position is Rev. Rumpa's own.

Even within the Protestant Toraja Church, there is ambivalence. Rev. Parantean claimed that in *Aluk To Dolo*, the image is viewed as indwelt and empowered by the *roh* (spirit) of the dead. Mr. Sombolayuk was 'unsure' whether the spirit was thought to enter

the image, whilst Rev. Parintak suggested that the *tau-tau* was 'probably' conceived as being indwelt by the *roh*. Protestant Toraja Church interviewees offered a range of Christian perspectives on the image -

1. As a photograph, though Mr. Sombolayuk felt this could easily be used as an excuse to justify its use.
2. As embodying power, particularly for older people who have become Christians, for those more nominally 'attached' to Christianity, for those new in the Christian faith and for long-established Christians "who do not yet have sufficient knowledge." (Rev. Parintak) These groups find difficulty in separating *Aluk To Dolo* and Christianity in their thinking about images.
3. As a *dewa* (god) inseparably linked with *Aluk To Dolo* and therefore unacceptable to Christians.
4. As a decoration which has no meaning at all.
5. As a combined memorial and photograph. Lebang and Sarira pointed out that Western Christians place flowers on graves as a loving memory of the departed. In practice, however, many Christian Torajanese families are highly reluctant to replace the *tau-tau* with an actual photograph.
6. As an index of economic standing, social status and ethnic identity i.e. as having no 'religious' function.
7. As totally meaningless, because it has purely 'cultural', not religious, significance.

Within the Kibaid Church, Rev. Bokko maintained that followers of *Aluk To Dolo* do not believe that the dead soul enters the image but some rather believe the image to be merely a photo-memorial of the deceased. Rev. Salipadang however is convinced that in *Aluk To Dolo*, the *tau-tau* is a substitute for the dead person and is definitely worshipped, but only as a person and not as a *dewata* (god) or *arwah* (soul of the dead). Interviewees in the Bethel Church were united in their claim that in *Aluk To Dolo* the soul of the dead is invited to enter the *tau-tau* and people make offerings to it. Salurappa pointed out that his own former church - the 'Toraja Church' - banned images precisely because many Christians also held such a view of the *tau-tau*. According to the Pentecostal Church, followers of *Aluk To Dolo* do demonstrate their belief in the power of an image by regularly changing its clothes, by the sacrificing of buffaloes and by the singing of songs to the image. Rev. Kadang feels that most Christians still see power in the image and the Pentecostal Church thus rejects it.

The image of the dead clearly still has multiple significance which lies in the eye of every beholder. A range of views exists.

### 2.5.2.2 THE SACRIFICIAL OFFERING (*korban or persembahan*)

Three main issues were addressed in this section of the interview, namely the form, recipients and function of sacrifices. The areas in which differences of opinion emerged

included the number of animals sacrificed, the extent to which the meat is considered to be for sacrificial purpose or for human consumption and the intended recipients of sacrifices.

Despite some variation, there was broad agreement among interviewees about the smallness and selective nature of the offerings. The best parts of inner organs are laid on leaves on the offering table and prayed over by a leader or priest. Petron (Catholic) states that these selected pieces of meat are taken from one perfect animal only and that all the rest of the meat is considered non-sacrificial. Nathan (Catholic), however, whilst agreeing that the best pieces of one animal are sacrificed, goes on to argue that the reason for this is so that the god will accept all the other animals as well. Indeed in *Aluk To Dolo*, says Nathan, *all* animals are believed to have been sacrificed. Nathan, moreover, argues that some priests do take parts from more than one animal in order to represent *all* the rest, since each type of animal has to be represented in the pieces taken. Petron is of the opinion that the sacrificial portion, being the best part, is eaten by guests after being offered in sacrifice and is even believed to carry a blessing; on the other hand Nathan claims that the sacrificial part is simply abandoned because it is expressly forbidden for human consumption.

This uncertainty and inconsistency even within the Catholic Church is reflected in the different viewpoints of the Protestant Toraja Church. Rev. Rumpa says an offering is sometimes taken from one animal, and sometimes from a few, but not from all animals, unless the feast is very small. He contends that only the small, sacrificed portion is held to be sacrificial, even though it represents the rest of the meat. Thus, the bulk of the meat, for consumption by guests and allocation to specific individuals or groups, is *not* held to be sacrificial. Rev. Duma agrees but does not even consider the sacrificial portion as representing the rest. Interestingly Rev. Bokko (Kibaid Church) also felt that the bulk of meat is not considered to have been offered in sacrifice. Against this view, however, Sombolayuk (Toraja Church) stated that a little meat is taken from several animals as representative of all animals, such that *all* the meat is considered sacrificial. Rev. Parantean notes that only the *imam* (priest) actually makes the sacrifice, the others being spectators of the event, and that offerings are taken from one animal only, which represents the rest. Thus in his view all animals are therefore 'sacrificial' and it is in this context that he points out that some Christians try to justify their eating on the grounds that only one animal is sacrificed and the rest are for consumption only and thus acceptable for eating. The idea that *all* meat must be considered sacrificial was strongly supported by Rev. Salipadang (Kibaid) and Rev. Kendek (Pentecostal). Two interviewees - Rev. Salurappa (Bethel) and Rev. Kadang (Pentecostal) - also took up this position but added another plank to their argument, namely that in a death feast, although only one buffalo may be the actual sacrifice, nevertheless all the other slaughtered buffalo are believed to accompany the dead soul to *Puya* and in view of this, *all* the animals in that sense have a sacrificial function. This whole issue of what constitutes 'sacrificial food' is clearly controversial and some are not really sure where they stand. Lebang and Sarira

(Toraja Church) feel that in *Aluk To Dolo*, only the offered part is sacrificial, though they both commented that "it is very difficult to differentiate between the sacrificial part and the eaten part." Rev. Parintak (Toraja Church) simply declared himself to be 'unsure'.

As regards recipients of sacrifices in the *rambu solo* (death feasts), the standard position is that, in contrast to *rambu tuka*, the offerings are made to the souls of the dead, rather than to *deata* (gods). Nathan (Catholic) feels that sacrifices at death feasts are made indirectly to the *deata* as deified souls of the ancestors. Rev. Duma maintains that these sacrifices are directed towards the *roh* (spirit of the dead) and at a later time, towards the *dewa* (god) when the *roh* seeks to become a *dewa*. Sombolayuk (Toraja Church) was uncertain but felt the offerings were made to the *roh* but "perhaps also to *deata* (gods) and maybe even to *Puang Matua*." Rev. Parantean (Toraja Church) sees both 'dead souls' and 'gods' as recipients of offerings. Lebang and Sarira (Toraja Church) stated that offerings were made to the soul of the dead person but sometimes to ancestors for their help in the process. Rev. Parintak (Toraja Church) agreed but was unsure whether they were offered to *deata* in the sense of deified ancestors. Rev. Bokko (Kibaid) saw no difference between 'souls of the dead' and 'ancestors', whilst Salurappa (Bethel) viewed these funeral offerings in *Aluk To Dolo* as being offered to the 'souls of ancestors', to *dewa maut* (the god of death) and to *Puang Matua*, the highest god.

As regards function there is a widespread view in the Kibaid, Bethel and Pentecostal churches that many Christians still see sacrifice as having a predominantly 'religious' function - namely, to secure acceptance of the departed soul by the ancestral gods and thus to secure ongoing blessings for living descendants. For such people the struggle is whether or not to eat and whether or not the pig/buffalo they have brought as a gift or to repay a debt to the bereaved family will actually be selected as the sacrificial animal. For others, however, the twin arguments that only the sacrificial portion is sacrificial and that in any case it does not constitute worship directed to an actual deity but rather honouring of a departed soul and being present to comfort the bereaved family, serve to justify their presence and involvement in cultic feasts.

The whole issue thus is far from simple and interpretation of sacrifice varies from one person to another. Sombolayuk (Toraja Church) helpfully indicated at least four categories of Christian response in Toraja -

**Group 1** Some Christians know that according to *Aluk To Dolo*, the consumable food has been represented in the sacrifice and in view of this, they either refuse to eat it or eat it unhappily.

**Group 2** Some Christians believe that although, in *Aluk To Dolo*, the meat they eat has been represented by the part actually sacrificed, yet for them, it does not matter, because in their own eyes, their food has not been represented in such a sacrifice and is thus untainted by *Aluk To Dolo*.

**Group 3** Some Christians simply do not know that the eatable part has been represented in the sacrifice, and they therefore eat it because they consider it to be normal food.

Group 4 Some Christians know that in *Aluk To Dolo* the meat they eat has been represented by the part actually sacrificed but for them it does not matter because in their eyes, neither the part to be eaten nor the part already sacrificed, has actually been sacrificed at all because in any case, the *deata* (gods) do not exist.

### 2.5.2.3 COMMUNAL EATING (*Pesta Makan*)

The emphasis in this section of the interviews was on the division of food, the consumption of food and the significance of communal eating at cultic festivals.

A consensus emerged that the bulk of food, after the small sacrifices, was divided into two - part was cooked and consumed *in situ*, whilst part was given in raw state to specified individuals, families and groups to be taken home after the ceremony. The basis for both divisions, in terms of quantity and quality of meat, is determined by the social status of the recipients. Interviewees were also fairly agreed in their view that all guests at a ceremony, regardless of whether or not they have contributed anything, have the right to eat a portion of food. As for shares of meat, Rev. Parintak (Toraja Church) pointed out that allocation depends also on a person's function. Thus the officiating priest receives a large amount because of his function and generous portions are often given to local government officials, visiting dignitaries and key figures in society. Members of the 'Toraja Church' noted that some meat taken home by families might occasionally be sold at market in the town of Rantepao.

As regards the sacrificial portion itself, a range of views existed in the Protestant Toraja Church concerning its destiny. Rev. Rumpa said it was normally eaten by the people present, Duma believed children usually ate it, Rev. Parantean felt it was normally not eaten because it was considered to have been 'eaten' already by spirits, whilst Rev. Parintak held the view that the offered portion either dries up or is eaten by animals.

If differences of opinion exist regarding the visible, observable elements of ritual, then how much more so when it comes to perceptions of meaning and function. The whole issue of the perceived function of communal meals is a vexed one. Our two Catholic interviewees took a decidedly social view of meals. Nathan put forward the view that meals function to enhance family solidarity and to strengthen the oneness and unity of the Torajanese ethnic group at large. Petron similarly claimed that whilst sacrifice does have a 'religious' function in *Aluk To Dolo*, the actual meal functions socially as an expression of fellowship and togetherness. Likewise, Mr. Salurappa of the evangelical Bethel Church took the line that communal eating never had a religious function and that the only religious function was that of the actual sacrificial offering itself. Interviewees from the Protestant Toraja Church similarly added their voice in support of social function, using such expressions as 'family solidarity', 'ethnic bond', 'brotherhood', 'fellowship' and 'togetherness'. When probed further, however, the interviewees began to reveal some crucial ideas in this whole question of communal eating at cultic festivals.

Once again we encounter the difficulty of delimiting boundaries. Sombolayuk (Toraja Church) stated that communal eating had no actual religious function in *Aluk To Dolo*, yet in the same breath he noted the Torajanese belief that the attendance of a large number of guests is reckoned to bring blessings to the living descendants. Two elderly and highly experienced interviewees of the 'Toraja Church' - Lebang and Sarira - also confirmed that guests are considered an index of blessing from the gods to the extent that if people live for any period of time without guests coming, then they feel they must have done something wrong and they therefore arrange a feast as a way of confessing sin and re-securing divine blessings. Rev. Parintak (Toraja Church) added that in *Aluk To Dolo* communal eating could be an opportunity to express pleasure because of blessings received from the gods, thus constituting a 'religious' function. Indeed Rev. Parantean (Toraja Church) saw fellowship and family strength as being indications of involvement in a fundamentally religious ceremony. Rev. Duma (Toraja Church), on the other hand, was convinced that such eating together had no religious function and even suggested that many Christians welcomed such opportunities as occasions for evangelistic outreach to followers of *Aluk To Dolo*. Others somewhat cynically doubted the validity of Duma's remark, however. Rev. Salipadang (Kibaid) noted the positives from communal meals, namely sharing in the mourning and suffering of the bereaved; expression of *gotong-royong* - mutual help in difficulties; renewal of family solidarity; opportunity to repair bitter or broken relationships; initiation of new relationships leading to marriage. The negatives, however, include family feuds if food division is unfair and debt or bankruptcy through inability to meet ritual obligations by providing animals in sufficient numbers. Mr. Tangkesalu (Bethel) added the danger of excess and waste at large feasts, with associated social pride and arrogance as wealth is openly displayed for all to see. Several interviewees also mentioned the dangers of sexual immorality during protracted cultic festivals.

The final word is with our three oldest interviewees from the Protestant 'Toraja Church'. Rev. Rumpa affirmed that *Aluk To Dolo* feasts do have a social function, yet immediately said that this social function was hard to separate from religious content. Such a view was echoed by Lebang and Sarira who touched the core of the problem in their joint statement that -

The main problem is the impossibility of separating *agama* (religion) and *adat* (culture). They are inextricably intertwined. If we try to separate them, we become secularized. We cannot say 'Yes' or 'No' to involvement in *Aluk To Dolo*. There must be a long process of transformation. Our problem is how to be a Torajanese AND a Christian.

#### 2.5.2.4 CONCEPTS OF THE DIVINE WORLD

Although all interviewees agreed with the basic distinction between *Rambu Tuka* ceremonies directed to the *deata* (gods) and *Rambu Solo* geared to the *roh* or *arwah* (souls of the dead), nevertheless it has become apparent in our analysis of sacrifice, that

rigid, clear-cut, black-and-white distinctions are not always made in people's minds between *Puang Matua* (a *dewa*, albeit the highest god), the *deata* of specific locations (gods), the *deata* of the dead (deified ancestral souls) and the *roh/arwah* (souls of the dead not yet deified). Since these beings are the intended recipients of sacrificial offerings, we asked questions about Torajanese perceptions of these beings in the *Aluk To Dolo* system.

Even within the Catholic Church, divergence of opinion emerged. Nathan contends that *Puang Matua* is one *dewa* (god) born from another and that he created and looks after the world. Petron, however, claims that in *Aluk To Dolo*, *Puang Matua* was not created but rather has existed since eternity. Indeed Petron made the interesting comment that basically and originally *Aluk To Dolo* believed in many gods and that its confession of one god has only come about through Christian influence. Nathan notes the belief in *dewa* (gods) of the sky, earth and under the earth and points out that *roh* (souls of the dead) which are perfected also become *dewa* (gods). Petron however says that *dewa* are higher than *roh*. He also says that in *Aluk To Dolo* there are good and bad *dewa* but equates 'bad gods' with *roh jahat* (evil spirits), thus identifying 'gods' with 'spirits'. Rev. Parantean (Toraja Church) however claims that in *Aluk To Dolo* there are no bad gods but that there are independent 'evil spirits' which do not come from man. Further uncertainty emerges when Parantean contends that *roh* can also refer to the human mind. Lebang and Sarira (Toraja Church) by contrast argue that in *Aluk To Dolo*, *roh jahat* ('evil spirits') are separate forces of unknown origin and have no link with *dewa* (gods) or with *arwah* (souls of the dead), in spite of the view of many that dead souls which are not given ritual end up as wandering *roh jahat* ('evil spirits'). Others however argue that *roh jahat* are the spirits of the dead for whom sufficient sacrificial rites have not been offered. According to Petron, moreover, *roh* (souls of the dead) cannot become *dewa*. There are also *roh* in animals, people and objects and these *roh* are not distinguishable. The concept of *dewa* (god) would appear to be an elastic and slippery term capable of varying interpretations.<sup>19</sup> The range of understandings is thus considerable. Even among those who believe that the soul of the dead can attain to divinity, some feel that this happens immediately after the death feast, while others insist that this transformation depends on a separate and subsequent completion ritual.

Sombolayuk (Toraja Church) offered a final comment that the boundaries between *roh*, *dewa* and *Puang Matua* are not always clear - there is a measure of variation. Rev.

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<sup>19</sup> The resulting complexity can also be seen in the results of Clifford Geertz's Doctoral Research at Harvard, in which he sought "to bring home the reality of the complexity, depth and richness of their [Indonesia's Javanese people] spiritual life." (*The Religion of Java* 1960: 7) In a fascinating study, he traced the role and interplay of three major influences on Javanese syncretism - *abangan* (animism), *santri* (Islam) and *prijaji* (Hinduism). In particular he notes, regarding animistic conceptions of the divine, that "... the details about spirits vary from individual to individual. There is much discussion and dispute about the spirit world, and, while there is general agreement on the reality and importance of supernatural beings ... each individual seems to have some ideas of his own as to their exact nature and some personal experiences to prove it." (1960: 17)

Parintak (Toraja Church) made the same point but added the comment that even though the priest knows the differences, most people do not actually think the issue through, unless a crisis arises and people then begin to wonder whether perhaps a particular *arwah* (soul of the dead) needs to be placated. Lebang and Sarira (Toraja Church) - probably the most knowledgeable authorities on *Aluk To Dolo* - stated that in fact departed souls are conceived as being both *arwah* (dead soul) and *dewa* (a god). They commented that *arwah* and *dewa* are hard to separate in people's thinking, a position endorsed by Rev. Bokko (Kibaid).

Within the Pentecostal Church, contrast also emerged. Rev. Kendek set forth the basic equation that *roh* = *arwah* = *roh jahat* (evil spirit) = *dewa* (god). Kendek himself believed these phenomena amounted to the same thing, namely evil occult. Rev. Kadang, however, distinguished between *roh* (soul of the dead) and *dewa/deata* (gods which control different aspects of life). He argued that in *Aluk To Dolo* some gods can bring blessing and other gods bring disaster. He believes that a *roh jahat* can be a bad god or a bad person's spirit or a dead person's spirit that failed to enter *Puya* (land of souls). These elements, says Kadang, are perceived separately but sometimes they are all equated in *Aluk To Dolo*. This surely helps to account for the apparent inconsistency of Torajanese traditional belief. Although for example Mr. Salurappa (Bethel) makes a basic two fold distinction between *dewata* (gods) who control nature and *roh* (spirits) which control mankind, nevertheless he goes on to claim that *dewata* can also mean *roh* and that all *roh* are counted as *dewata*. Variability and apparent inconsistency of conceptions in *Aluk To Dolo* - for centuries a religion of oral tradition - tend to produce not black and white distinctions but rather, blurred, grey areas, where absolute boundaries are rendered impossible and multiple interpretations become highly probable.

A final word from Kibaid and Bethel Churches is helpful in this. Rev. Salipadang argues that at funerals offerings are made both to *roh leluhur* (souls of the dead ancestors) and to the *dewata* (the spirits that have become 'gods'). Rev. Bokko takes the line that offerings made to *dewa* (gods) are idolatrous but offerings to *roh* are not idolatrous until the person's soul becomes a 'god'. He admits however that it is hard to distinguish between *roh* and *dewa*, and that ambiguity occurs. Rev. Bokko then notes that some Christians try to justify their involvement in *Aluk To Dolo* festivals on the grounds that they are honouring the departed person rather than worshipping divinities. Rev. Bokko himself believes they are in fact worshipping. Mr. Salurappa (Bethel) however contends that most Torajanese Christians attend feasts not to worship but to respect the dead and the family. Both Rev. Bokko (Kibaid) and Mr. Salurappa (Bethel) make a distinction between 'worship' and 'honour' and yet they arrive at different conclusions regarding what motivates Christians to attend feasts. Ambiguity, ambivalence, uncertainty and apparent inconsistency are present and compound the basic problem of deciding just what constitutes 'idolatrous worship'.



### 2.5.2.5 CHRISTIAN MODIFICATIONS OF CULTIC FESTIVALS

There are basically three forms of cultic festivals in Toraja -

1. Torajanese Christians who have family members and relatives still committed to *Aluk To Dolo* are under strong obligation to attend rituals, especially funeral ceremonies, which are carried out in accordance with the beliefs and practices of *Aluk To Dolo*.
2. Many Christians, in holding funerals for deceased Christians in a generally Christian family context, have adapted the *Aluk To Dolo* funeral ceremony and sought to some extent to 'Christianize' it.
3. Some festivals are now deliberately arranged by wealthy Christians along the traditional *Aluk To Dolo* lines on the grounds that the ritual activity is 'purely cultural' and by families with such a wide mix of religious affiliations that they opt for an *Aluk To Dolo* format so as to appear to be 'neutral' and to demonstrate their cultural roots and identity.

Petron (Catholic) highlights the central problem. He claims that in Christian festivals, no ritual is present but then he immediately admits that in some of them, rituals are in fact present, but that those rituals are "only cultural formalities." Petron's own explanation of this apparent paradox need not surprise us - "*Aluk* [religious regulations and prescriptions] and *adat* [cultural traditions] are impossible to separate." The Catholic Church has tried to adapt *Aluk To Dolo* ceremonies by introducing a service and prayer, but prayer is also offered to the souls of the dead and pigs are still killed, though "for consumption only." Special days after *Aluk To Dolo* funerals (3rd, 7th, 40th and 100th) which traditionally mark stages of the soul's journey, have been adopted by the Catholic Church as special days of prayer to God.

Sombolayuk (Toraja Church) made the point that although the visible ritual such as sacrificial acts may have been removed from Christian ceremonies, nevertheless people's thinking may still be geared to the old rituals. Parintak (Toraja Church) admitted that many Christians still erect and change the clothes of *tau-tau* (effigies of the dead) even if there is no special ceremony involved, and that Christians prefer to slaughter pigs rather than buy the necessary meat in the market beforehand. For the Pentecostal Church, if any food and drink is present at all, it must be pre-prepared off-site away from all taint or suggestion of *Aluk To Dolo*. Rev. Kadang for example believes that over half of all Torajanese Christians still believe that food is taken to *Puya* (Land of Souls) by the dead soul. The Pentecostal Church thus views *adat* (cultural traditions) as having been hopelessly poisoned by *aluk* (religious regulations) and therefore sees *adat* and *aluk* as incompatible. Indeed it considers *Aluk To Dolo* and Christianity as opposing each other and as totally irreconcilable. The result is a position of extreme separation rather than modification. As Parintak (Toraja Church) explained, however, some Christians believe *adat* to be good and all that is needed is the removal of *aluk*. Finally he notes that some Christians view *adat* and *iman* (faith) as separate and thus feel at ease to be fully involved in *Aluk To Dolo* festivals.

## 2.5.2.6 THE EXTENT OF CHRISTIAN INVOLVEMENT IN CULTIC FESTIVALS

The conclusions of our interviewees will now be stated by denomination prior to our analysis of the basic causes of differences in viewpoints.

### 2.5.2.6.1 Catholic Church

Both Nathan and Petron believe that Catholics may attend *Aluk To Dolo* festivals, particularly funerals, on a number of grounds, namely that they are thereby paying respects to the bereaved family, that they are expressing the solidarity of the Torajanese ethnic group, that the main part of the food has not been offered in sacrifice, that there are no *dewa* (gods), that Christians believe the food has been offered to *their* God and that in any case the food is ordinary food. Both interviewees thus allow attendance and eating but forbid actual participation in making sacrificial offerings. Petron admits that due to strong family obligation and pressure, some Christians are still actively involved in the practice of making sacrificial offerings, claiming that they are honouring the dead/bereaved rather than worshipping gods and that although they are involved, it is not "sampai masuk di hati" - "to the point of entering the heart." Petron concedes that such reasons are really excuses and as such are not acceptable. However, both interviewees acknowledge the existence of blurred dividing-lines between attendance, eating and sacrificial involvement. For example, prayer is made in *Aluk To Dolo* for the soul's successful journey to *Puya*. Some Christians remain silent during this prayer, but others actually do join the prayer on the grounds that they are addressing themselves to *Puang Matua* "whom we now know in and through Jesus Christ." Whilst it may be acceptable for a Christian to help lift a coffin at a funeral, it is debatable whether that person can continue to hold the coffin when it is deliberately turned to face *Puya*, the Land of Souls. The ambiguity and uncertainty concerns the dividing line between presence and participation. A Christian might give a pig to the bereaved family for consumption by guests but a problem then arises if that particular pig is selected for the sacrifice. The conclusion of our Catholic interviewees was that attendance and eating are not to be labelled 'idolatrous', but that Christians must draw the line when it comes to organising sacrifices and assembling sacrificial ritual materials. Ambiguities, whether genuinely confusing or deliberately exploited, do exist in the cultic festivals of Toraja. Such ambiguities serve to blur and complicate attempts to define the term 'idolatrous worship'.

### 2.5.2.6.2 Toraja Church (Protestant)

Three levels of involvement emerged in a broad consensus of opinion. There was general agreement that Christians could attend feasts, especially those following funerals, on the grounds of family responsibility. Rev. Parintak noted, however, that for some Christians, mere attendance already and automatically meant involvement, though he felt that only extreme Pentecostals would equate festival attendance with idolatry.

As regards eating, there was again a positive consensus but differences of opinion clearly existed on the thorny issue of what parts of the total food might be labelled 'sacrificial' and what parts 'non-sacrificial'. Rev. Rumpa supported eating out of respect for the deceased and family and because it was ordinary food which had not been 'offered'. Rev. Duma likewise felt that eating was justifiable because the sacrificial portion is separate from the bulk of the consumable meat.

On the issue of participation by Christians in the sacrificial act, the common view was that such a degree of involvement clearly was unacceptable and therefore forbidden. Even here, however, ambiguity creeps in to cloud the situation. For example, the problem of a Christian bringing an animal to repay a debt and having his/her animal chosen for sacrifice, is an ongoing reality and dilemma in Toraja. Some Christians give money instead but are aware, says Parintak, that the money will probably be used to finance sacrificial acts. Some Christians contribute bamboo but inevitably some of this will be used in the sacrificial offering of meat. Some Christians still give a little to a sacrifice just in case there might be a blessing in it for them. Sombolayuk divided Christians into two types - those who do not yet understand Christian faith, either because they have recently entered the faith or because they have been Christians a long time but without growth in faith, and those who understand the faith and involve themselves in festivals because they no longer believe in other gods. The problem is how to define the boundaries of idolatry in practice. Both Rev. Rumpa and Rev. Duma agreed that sacrificial acts are unacceptable as forms of Christian participation. Rumpa sees a basic distinction between 'menghormati keluarga' (respecting/honouring the family, and therefore acceptable, even commendable) and 'menyembah roh/dewa' (worshipping souls/gods, and thus unacceptable). Duma, however, conceded that such a distinction could be manipulated by those looking for convenient excuses to justify their own involvement in sacrificial acts.

### 2.5.2.6.3 Kibaid Church

The official position of the Kibaid Church is that *Aluk To Dolo* style funeral feasts are not acceptable. A simple burial service is held but food is rarely available, except perhaps that which has been pre-prepared. Rev. Bokko and Rev. Salipadang both hold the view that it is better to avoid attending any funeral feasts, but that because of the strength of family obligation, attendance at such feasts ought not to be construed as idolatry, unless attendance is forced or unless subsequent debt produces poverty among participants. If Christians attend an *Aluk To Dolo* funeral, then they must bring their own food. For the Kibaid Church, sacrificial acts are clearly out of the question for Christians, but once again, our interviewees noted shades of involvement which cloud the whole issue of defining the boundaries of 'idolatrous worship'. Bokko is convinced that because of family obligation, love of food or sheer hard-headedness, some Christians do involve themselves in *Aluk To Dolo* to varying degrees. For example, at funerals, the *Ma'badon* dance is a lengthy verbal recital of the life of the deceased and some Christians find this acceptable,

viewing it as *kesenian* (art). However, the climax of this dance is the transformation of the *roh* (soul) into the *dewa* (god), and according to Bokko, some Christians do join in the words of prayer to the soul to bring blessing to living descendants. Rev. Salipadang takes the line that if a Christian takes a pig or buffalo to be sacrificed, then this clearly constitutes involvement in idolatry, whereas if it is taken for consumption, then it is not idolatry. The whole issue is not that simple however for the fate of the animal cannot be guaranteed in advance. Some Kibaid Christians claim that the meat is only taken to feasts to fill people's stomachs but other Kibaid believers consider *all* meat at feasts as sacrificial. Ambivalence and uncertainty permeate the whole issue. At what point does meat become 'sacrificial' and at what point does eating become 'idolatrous'?

#### 2.5.2.6.4 Bethel Church

The consensus of interviewees in this denomination was that attendance and eating were permissible for Christians as long as there was just enough meat for the guests and no more. There is, however, ambivalence here, for in his next breath, Tangkesalu stated that although Christians could attend *Aluk To Dolo* funerals, they should not eat food since *all* of it has been offered to *dewa* (gods) for the journey of the soul. Once again, therefore, a great range of opinion on the significance of food emerges and the divergence of opinion becomes even stronger when it comes to trying to define what is meant in practical terms by 'involvement in idolatry'. Salurappa stated in interview that a wide range of motivations draws Christians to attend cultic festivals. Some attend purely for the sake of family and society; some attend and involve themselves in ritual on the grounds that they no longer believe in the gods of *Aluk To Dolo*; some get involved but do not realise the links with *Aluk To Dolo*; others get involved simply to follow the crowd for a lively day out, never giving a thought to the accompanying ritual.

#### 2.5.2.6.5 Pentecostal Church

Rev. Kendek saw no justification for Christians even to attend *Aluk To Dolo* funerals. Indeed he did not even believe there was such a thing as a *Christian* funeral feast. Nevertheless such is the strength of family obligation in Torajanese society that both Kendek and Kadang said they would permit a Christian to attend a funeral. As regards eating, however, Kendek forbids consumption and the taking along of animals. Kadang prefers to stipulate that no one should be forced to eat or to abstain, but does insist that any food consumed by Christians should have been pre-prepared away from the ritual location.<sup>20</sup> His rationale is that although there is no such thing as *berhala* (idols),

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<sup>20</sup> Even those Christians who express total abhorrence of cultic ritual and long to impose a black and white 'solution' of complete abstinence and separation, are forced to admit that such a position is virtually impossible in practice. All believers seeking to cope with the complexity of these practical issues by applying scripture need to bear in mind the somewhat cutting, but undeniably valid, comment of Mary Douglas, namely, "Fundamentalists, who are not magical in their attitude to the Eucharist, become magical in their attitude to the Bible." (*Natural Symbols* 1970: 19)

nevertheless, not all Christians have reached that understanding.

Both interviewees condemned Christian involvement in actual sacrificial rites. For Kadang, it is active involvement which counts as idolatry and his argument against elaborate feasts centres on the diverting of funds which otherwise could have been released for hospital treatment, educational fees, church buildings and ministers' wages. Kendek finally notes that some Christians are *terlibat* (passive verb 'involved') in festivals, as for example when pressurised by family obligation, while others *melibatkan diri* (active verb 'to involve oneself') in the sense of deliberate choice. The former group he criticizes as "unwise", the latter he condemns as "inexcusable".

### 2.5.3 THE UNDERLYING CAUSES OF DIFFERENCES IN VIEWPOINT

We have discovered broad agreement concerning the basic distinction between *rambu tuka* and *rambu solo* ceremonies. We have seen relative agreement about the observable features of cultic festivals. We have described wide disagreement over the interpretation of cultic phenomena, concepts of divinity and the limits of Christian involvement in cultic feasts. Our concern now, in seeking to understand the dynamics of the idol-food issue, is to identify the factors which cause some Christians to view involvement very differently from others -

#### 2.5.3.1 Educational Background and Level

Nathan (Catholic) noted that this factor could affect attitudes, but in opposite directions. For example, the highly educated were generally the wealthier people but their responses to feasts differ. Some see the great wastage of resources at large festivals and are reluctant to be involved. Others, especially those who finance large feasts from outside Toraja, are influenced by pride and prestige and simply exacerbate the problem. Virtually all interviewees saw educational background as a factor which influenced Christians' attitudes to involvement in cultic festivals but maintained that it was not the sole, determining factor because there could be considerable variation of viewpoint even within one educational level.

#### 2.5.3.2 Socio-Economic Level

The influence of social class on *Aluk To Dolo* ritual has already been seen and it need cause no surprise that all interviewees mentioned it as an underlying factor in cultic festivals. Again, however, it was felt that Christians from the same social class often held radically different views on Christian involvement in cultic festivals. Social class thus is an influencing factor but not the sole or absolute determinant of attitudes. Parintak (Toraja Church) made the interesting observation that although traditionally Kibaid Church members have tended to be relatively poor, yet some have gained wealth and become

more involved in ritual festivals, in some cases switching to Toraja Church membership for the greater freedom offered.

### 2.5.3.3 Family Obligation and *Tongkonan* (Clan Membership)

A feature of every interviewee's response to questions was the conviction that fear of being snubbed or expelled from one's family is a very strong incentive to co-operate in completing and fulfilling one's ritual obligations. Such issues as division of inheritance at funerals means that, as Sombolayuk (Toraja Church) pointed out, some Christians view *Aluk To Dolo* festivals essentially as family i.e. social, not religious, issues. Bokko (Kibaid), however, put forward the view that conflicting opinions could arise within any one particular extended family, even though that *tongkonan* often displayed unity and unanimity of view. Family obligation thus does influence a person's attitude toward involvement in cultic festivals, but again it is not the sole deciding factor.

### 2.5.3.4 Church Affiliation

It has already become apparent that there is a broad gradation between the more accommodating attitudes of the Catholic and Toraja Church (Protestant) denominations at one end of the spectrum and the separatist position of the Bethel and Pentecostal Groups at the other, with Kibaid Christians falling somewhere in the middle. Nathan (Catholic) acknowledged the strong influence of the church's teaching on denominational thinking. Rev. Parintak (Toraja Church) agreed, but nevertheless recognised a broad range of opinion even within one denomination. Lebang and Sarira (Toraja Church) made the astute observation, for example, that although the basic Pentecostal position was one of rigorous separation from cultic festivals, nevertheless this position could become more flexible if particular Pentecostals suddenly found themselves with family responsibilities to be involved in a feast.

### 2.5.3.5 Personal Vested Interest

As Petron (Catholic) explained, feelings of *gengsi* (prestige) and the need to avoid *rasa malu* (feelings of embarrassment) and 'loss of face' are very significant factors which cause many Christians to be involved in cultic festivals in Toraja. A Christian invited to a feast by a prominent person will find it hard to refuse, especially if it helps to fulfil ambition and promote personal advancement. Parintak (Toraja Church) defines this tendency toward prestige and personal importance as "pragmatic individualism". Some Christians, argues Rev. Parantean (Toraja Church), thus deliberately turn a blind eye to their own involvement in ritual in order to promote their own status in society.

### 2.5.3.6 Individual Interpretation

It is overwhelmingly this factor, claimed all our interviewees, which finally explains the wide range of Christian perspectives on the issue of involvement in cultic feasts in

Toraja. Every interviewee stressed this fundamental factor and expressions used by one interviewee were echoed repeatedly by the others.

Petron (Catholic) said that the ultimate determining factor was "individual interpretation" which in turn depended on "theological understanding" and "personal faith", based on knowledge and understanding of the Bible. Even Nathan (Catholic), who stressed the role of the church's teaching, also noted that individual viewpoint was a key factor.

Rumpa (Toraja Church) used such expressions as "different theological understandings", "theological viewpoint", and "the levels of spiritual maturity of believers". He added that the problem of idol-food persists in Toraja precisely because there is a variation of attitude among individuals and also because there exists a gap between what is agreed in theory and what is done in practice. Duma (Toraja Church) named "individual faith and its application" as of paramount influence and as being related to level of Bible knowledge, such that different interpretations of the Bible create different understandings about Christian involvement in cultic festivals. The phrase "individual interpretation" was used also by Sombolayuk and Parintak (Toraja Church), the latter emphasising different theological understandings of the relationship between Gospel and Culture.

Bokko (Kibaid) also underlined individual interpretation but argued that if a Christian is still strongly attracted to *Aluk To Dolo* festivals, then that indicates a lack of Christian assurance. For Bokko, spiritual attitude is a prime influence on attitude to cultic involvement. All other interviewees put priority on individual interpretation.

All interviewees thus basically agreed on why they disagreed about Christian involvement in cultic festivals - individual interpretation, related to personal faith, theological understanding and spiritual awareness. Individual faith, maturity, understanding and interpretation were thus highlighted repeatedly as the prime factors that determine Christians' attitudes toward cultic festivals and their level of involvement in them. Nevertheless all of this does not produce a regular spectrum, for some mature Christians believe "there are no other gods", and therefore involve themselves in cult, while others believe in total separation. Our analysis requires to be taken one stage further.

#### **2.5.4 REASONS FOR THE RANGE OF INDIVIDUAL INTERPRETATIONS**

We now need to identify the reasons why there is a wide range of individual interpretation concerning cultic phenomena, concepts of divinity and the extent of Christian involvement in cultic feasts. This will enable us to see why the churches of Toraja continue to struggle with *Aluk To Dolo* ceremonies today. We will then be in a position to assess how these conclusions might help to open up lines of enquiry and suitable questions to address to the first century C.E. Corinthian Church situation to which Paul wrote. The ongoing and intractable problem of Christian involvement in cultic feasts

is rooted in the existence of a wide range of individual interpretations which in turn is generated by two overlapping and inter-related phenomena -

### 1. Ambiguities

It has emerged from both the writings of local Torajanese authors and Western anthropologists, as well as from views expressed by our interviewees, that each phase of the ritual process lends itself to different perceptions and interpretations.

The making of the *tau-tau* (image of the dead) is accompanied by sacrifices to gods and ancestors and as such is a religious phenomenon seen as indwelt by the dead soul and functioning powerfully as an intermediary between living descendants and deified ancestors. Even among those who view it in this way, however, some argue that one sacrifice guarantees life-long blessings, while others claim that regular offerings are needed. Others see the *tau-tau* as perpetuating social class while still others interpret it as art, decoration, photograph or memorial. Tangkesalu (Bethel) argued that it is because of this very ambiguity over the function of the *tau-tau* that some Christians seek to justify their involvement in *Aluk To Dolo* funeral festivals.

Different opinions exist regarding the number of animals from which sacrificial portions are taken. The intended recipient(s) of the sacrifices is not always clear and there is certainly considerable ambiguity regarding whether the sacrificial status of the sacrificed portion extends also to all the consumable food or not.

Communal eating is still viewed by some as religious in function but it also increases family solidarity, strengthens ethnic consciousness, displays wealth, divides the inheritance, cements relationships and provides comfort, brotherhood and aid. Eating is multi-functional and therefore ambiguous. Multiple interpretations thus become possible and this produces a situation in which 'idolatry' is in the eyes of the beholder rather than being definable in absolute terms.

### 2. Boundaries

The extreme difficulty or impossibility of defining boundaries emerged repeatedly in the comments of interviewees. Many Torajanese attend cultic feasts for social and family reasons, and at funerals, Christians justify their presence by saying that they are very definitely honouring the deceased and family, rather than in any sense worshipping deities. Nevertheless interviewees did admit that the overall concern in the Toraja mind is fear of what will result if ritual obligations are not met, namely punishment by gods and deified ancestors, as well as fear of betraying family obligations. In other words, 'religious' and 'social' considerations are involved for many Torajanese. We have also seen that distinctions between 'divinity' and 'humanity' are sometimes far from clear in people's minds.

We have already seen the indivisibility of *aluk* and *adat*. Intertwined with these is the term *kebudayaan* - mankind's material and spiritual attainments, covering science,



belief-system, art, morality, law, culture.<sup>21</sup> The essential problem faced by Christians in Toraja is that "*adat dan kebudayaan berakar dalam ajaran Aluk To Dolo*" - "*adat and kebudayaan have their roots in the teaching of Aluk To Dolo.*"<sup>22</sup> The dilemma for the church is two-fold - firstly that *adat* and *kebudayaan* cannot be separated from *Aluk To Dolo*, but secondly that the Gospel of Christ "cannot be given and expressed outside of tradition, customs and culture."<sup>23</sup> As Rev. Duma (Toraja Church) succinctly put the dilemma - "How to maintain Christian truth without sacrificing Torajanese culture." The Report of the Toraja Church Institute of Theology (note 21) explains that "there exist several ways of approach and interpretation with regard to *aluk, adat* and *kebudayaan* and this causes us to possess various different attitudes." (1984 p.i Introduction). As our interviewees all agreed, "... understanding depends on each person's own interpretation." (1984: 26). Ceremonies are multi-functional: political, social, economic, family, religious. No single element or factor can be isolated and identified as the exclusive kernel of the proceedings. The advent of Christianity has meant the removal of elements of *Aluk To Dolo* ritual but people's thinking is much slower to change. Life in the 'overlap' is a long, not short, process. The basic challenge to the Corinthians, we contend, was little different in essence from that which faces the Torajanese -

... how should mankind live as new mankind with new values amidst a society with old values, if this conflicts with the Word of God. A solution to this problem is not easy because on the one hand we may not leave society behind, but on the other hand we must live in obedience to new values. (*Aluk Adat and Kebudayaan* 1984: 77).

## 2.6 THE CORINTHIAN CHURCH

Our huge advantage in uncovering the dynamics of the idol food issue in Torajanese society and church has been the availability of living witnesses, in the form both of recent writings, Torajanese and Western, and of available interviewees from all denominations. The task we face in trying to shed light on the dynamics of the Corinthian situation is more daunting. We contend, nevertheless, that the ancient voice can be heard

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<sup>21</sup> Institut Theologia Gereja Toraja: *Aluk, Adat dan Kebudayaan (Religious Regulations, Traditions and Culture)*. No. 3 June 1984 p.12-13.

<sup>22</sup> Rev. Cornelius Parintak *The Funerary Practice in Tana Toraja: An Ethical-Theological Outlook*. M.Th. Thesis. S.E. Asia Graduate School of Theology, 1983, p.73.

<sup>23</sup> *Aluk Adat dan Kebudayaan* 1984: 106. This inseparability of social and religious function has been observed in some detail by Geertz in his work on Javanese syncretism. He considers the communal meal (*slametan*) to be central to the whole Javanese religious system but the meal is not mono-functional. The spirits are believed to consume the *aroma* of the food (1960: 15) such that they are satisfied and thereby persuaded not to trouble people. (1960: 14) The meal simultaneously functions socially to make all participants feel equal and thereby comfortable. In short, according to Geertz (1960: 11) the communal meal "symbolizes the mystic and social unity of those participating in it." (1960: 11)

through the cautious and careful investigation of archaeological, literary and epigraphical materials.<sup>24</sup> The same basic questions used in the Torajanese case-study will now, as far as is feasible, be addressed to the ancient Greco-Roman material. Our aim will be thus to 'hear' the Corinthian viewpoints, as well as Paul's, and to examine the interaction of all these viewpoints as they impinge on the text of 1 Corinthians 8-10. We shall first of all assess the current archaeological consensus on first century C.E. Corinth in order to short-list the likeliest cult candidates which formed the backcloth to the Corinthians' involvement in cultic festivals. We shall then assemble and assess primary source material which sheds light on the nature and perceived significance of images, sacrifices and communal meals in the Greco-Roman world. Finally we shall seek a fresh appraisal of 1 Corinthians 8-10 in the light of our background reconstruction work.

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<sup>24</sup> One fundamental similarity between Toraja and Corinth is pinpointed by V.P. Furnish "What Can Archaeology Tell Us? *Bib. Arch. Rev.* Vol. 15 (1988) p.27. He defines the crux issue at Corinth in terms of "... How could believers accommodate themselves to the realities of life in that age without forsaking the god in whom they had become heirs of an 'age to come'?" The dilemma of *conflict* in Toraja is, however, accompanied by forces of *integration*, three of which, not surprisingly, were noted by Geertz (1960: 6) in relation to Javanese syncretism, namely the rise of strong Indonesian nationalism, a sense of overriding cultural unity and a widespread tolerance of religious and ideological diversity.

## CHAPTER THREE

# THE CURRENT STATE OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION IN THE CORINTH AREA - ITS SIGNIFICANCE FOR STUDY OF 1 COR. 8-10

### 3.1 INTRODUCTION: THE NATURE OF ANCIENT EVIDENCE

F.C. Grant<sup>1</sup>, writing nearly half a century ago in the context of the paucity of evidence on how the ancients perceived Greek religion, provides us with a relevant challenge and warning -

How shall we ever get really inside that ancient faith, or complex of faiths, and see the world as men saw it then? There is no other way, I believe, than by a conscious effort of the imagination, by reading and thinking and in a sense dreaming our way back into it. And there is one caution we simply must never ignore - like the warnings to persons with magic gifts in many an old tale - we must not let our imaginings and our dreams conflict with the reality recorded in the books, the inscriptions, and the surviving rites; our indispensable guide must be a thorough knowledge of the facts so far as they have come down to us, all the facts, not just a pleasing little selection made to fit some theory or other!

Lack of material is one of the dilemmas we shall face but the other side of the coin, as Broneer<sup>2</sup> noted, is that the history of Corinthian cults is "many-sided", "elusive" and in terms of meaning attached to cult objects, "anything but precise." We recognise at the outset the validity of Broneer's further remark that "it is essential to bear these limitations in mind, for however desirable it may appear from the student's point of view to classify and clarify, nothing will be gained by ignoring the essentially illogical and fortuitous in all matters pertaining to religion."

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<sup>1</sup> F.C. Grant "Greek Religion in the Hellenistic-Roman Age" in *A.T.R.* Vol. 34 (1952) p.26. Grant here is reviewing the work of M.P. Nilsson *Geschichte der Griechischen Religion Vol. II Hellenistische und Römische Zeit* Munich: Beck 1950. Paucity of inscriptional evidence at Corinth has been observed by J.H. Kent *Corinth Vol. 8.3 The Inscriptions 1926-1950* ASCSA 1966 p.17. Kent laments that "...it is difficult to think of any other ancient site where the inscriptions are so cruelly mutilated and broken." Out of 1500 texts of the Roman Imperial Period - including over 1200 from the first two centuries C.E. - only 14 are intact, less than 100 are capable of reasonable restoration and over half are mere fragments of less than four letters in each. In addition to the problem of paucity of inscriptional evidence, we have to contend also with that which R. MacMullen notes, namely that "noone from the past has been good enough to tell us what he really thought he was doing when he wrote any religious message upon stone." (*Paganism in the Roman Empire*, Yale Univ. Press 1981 p.103).

<sup>2</sup> Oscar Broneer "Hero Cults in the Corinthian Agora" in *Hesperia* Vol. 11 (1942) p.128. His view is echoed by L.R. Farnell *Greek Hero Cults and Ideas of Immortality* Oxford: Clarendon Press 1921 p.69 - "Nearly all our hypotheses on Greek mythology, unless pushed to absurdity, leave something unexplained." With respect to Corinth, Prof. N. Bookidis opened the 1990 Oxford Symposium by underlining the difficulty of attempting to restore cult practice in a single place on the basis of extant artefacts. The nature and limitations of evidence is a great challenge to the investigation of background and particularly so where religion and ritual are concerned. See N. Bookidis "Ritual Dining in the Sanctuary of Demeter and Kore at Corinth: Some Questions in *Symptica: A Symposium on the Symposium* Ed. O. Murray. Oxford: Clarendon Press 1990 p.86.

### 3.2 AIMS OF AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL REVIEW

Since Lisle *Cults of Corinth* 1955 presented his work based on the earlier publications of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens, the latter organisation has extended its investigations in and around Corinth. Even so, one of its leading archaeologists is painfully aware of the work still required -

... Corinth is frustrating in the extreme because of the paucity of the ancient sources and the limited excavations that have been carried out - limited in terms of uncovering large parts of the Ancient City.<sup>3</sup>

A slightly less pessimistic view is taken by R.E. Oster, though he does admit that Corinth is not as blessed, archaeologically, as a city such as Ephesus.<sup>4</sup>

The purpose of this chapter is not to reproduce highly detailed evidence of the available archaeological findings from Corinth but rather to consider the most recent work of scholars and archaeologists in an attempt to answer two fundamental questions -

1. Which cults were most likely to have been operative in Corinth and district in the middle of the first century C.E.?
2. Which of these cults offer evidence of having involved images, sacrifices and communal meals, such that they might have constituted at least a part of the background addressed by Paul in 1 Cor.8-10?

### 3.3 THE ISSUE OF CONTINUITY/DISCONTINUITY IN CORINTH

D.W.J. Gill maintains that one of the uses of archaeology is "to provide evidence which can be formed into a picture of the material and cultural background for the texts."<sup>5</sup> In seeking to build such a picture of the possible background to 1 Cor.8-10, our interest is particularly in the century prior to Paul's visit to Corinth. A range of views does exist regarding the dates of Paul's stay in Corinth. Rees<sup>6</sup> places it somewhat vaguely within the

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<sup>3</sup> Private letter from Prof. Nancy Bookidis, dated 1st October 1992.

<sup>4</sup> Richard E. Oster Jr. "Use, Misuse and Neglect of Archaeological Evidence in Some Modern Works on 1 Corinthians (1 Cor.7:1-5; 8:10; 11:2-16; 12:14-26)" in *ZNTW* 83 (1992) pp.52-73.

<sup>5</sup> David W.J. Gill "Authorized or Unauthorized: A Dilemma for the Historian" in *Tyndale Bulletin* 43.1 (1992) p.195. This article is a critique of Robin Lane Fox *The Unauthorized Version: Truth and Fiction in the Bible*. Viking, London 1991.

<sup>6</sup> Rev. W. Rees "Corinth in St. Paul's Time, Part II Its People and Recent History" in *Scripture* 2 (1947) p.108 Catholic Biblical Association.

three year period 50-52 C.E. Murphy O'Connor<sup>7</sup> argues that Gallio (Acts 18:12) stayed in Corinth from June - late October 51 C.E. and he thus dates Paul's arrival in Corinth in spring 51 at the latest. He then stayed for 18 months (Acts 18:11), thus making it feasible for him to have attended or at least observed the Isthmian Games in spring 51. The cultic activity of Corinth from mid first century B.C.E. to mid first century C.E. is thus of particular interest to us. Corinth had been destroyed in 146 B.C.E. by the Roman general Lucius Mummius and apparently lay deserted for a century until it was resettled as a Roman colony in 44 B.C.E. by Julius Caesar. The two issues which have divided scholars are firstly the actual degree of desolation/abandonment between 146 and 44 B.C.E., and secondly the religious make-up of the Corinth which was rebuilt by the Romans. The latter issue clearly does affect our consideration of the cultic background of 1 Cor.8-10 and therefore merits some attention.

There are those who have argued for substantial continuity during the so-called century of desolation. One of the chief advocates of this position is W. Willis<sup>8</sup> who draws material from Cicero *De Lege Agraria* 1.2.5 and 2.87 which describes Corinth as a "most excellent and fruitful land" after 146 B.C.E. and from Cicero *Tusc. Disp.* 3.22.53, 54, which records Cicero's meeting with residents in Corinth in 79-77 B.C.E. Local shrines and manufacturing, argue Willis, continued during the alleged abandonment. Indeed Dio Chrysostom, *Discourses* 37.26 does suggest that in his day (1st Century C.E.), Corinth exhibited considerable assimilation to Greek culture. Willis thus argues (1991: 241) that despite certain new aspects, nevertheless "the Corinth which Paul visited was not a new creation, but a renovation of an old and important Greek city." A similar perspective is that of V. Furnish (1988: 25) who argues that "worship of the gods and goddesses of the old Greek pantheon did not cease with Roman colonization." Likewise Broneer,<sup>9</sup> for

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<sup>7</sup> J. Murphy O'Connor "The Corinth That Paul Saw" in *Biblical Archaeologist* Vol. 47 (1984) p.148. V. Furnish contends however that Paul may have arrived in early 50 C.E. and left in mid 51 ("What can archaeology tell us? *Bib Arch. Rev.* Vol. 15 No. 3 1988 p.20.) The latter chronology is the one maintained by R. Jewett *A Chronology of Paul's Life* Fortress Press 1979 p.100. He argues that Paul's most likely arrival date in Corinth was February 50, with a consequent departure in August 51, his appearance before Gallio being during the month of July 51 and the Apostolic Conference being held in October 51. Jewett's somewhat over-specific dating assessment is in contrast to the real uncertainty expressed by G. Lüdemann who lists the factors which make dating problematic, namely the unknown dating of Jesus' death, the uncertain length of Paul's stay in Arabia and our inability to pinpoint the precise point at which Paul met Aquila and Priscilla. Thus Lüdemann feels that Paul's eighteen-month founding visit to Corinth could have been "shortly after 41" with a subsequent visit in c.51-52. He readily admits, however, that this creates the problem of dealing with the intervening years. (See Gerd Lüdemann *Paul, Apostle to the Gentiles: Studies in Chronology*. Tr. from German by F. Stanley Jones. SCM Press Ltd. 1984 pp.171-2). The most realistic position - and one which reflects the general consensus - is that argued by L.C.A. Alexander, namely that on the basis of several methods of assessment, Paul's founding visit to Corinth falls most probably within the period 50-51. Alexander wisely points out that "it would be unrealistic to look for a more definitive chronology." See her article "Chronology of Paul" in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* Eds. G.F. Hawthorne, R.P. Martin and D.G. Reid IVP 1993.

<sup>8</sup> W. Willis "Corinthusne deletus est?" in *Biblische Zeitschrift* N.F. 35 (1991) pp.233-241.

<sup>9</sup> Oscar Broneer "Corinth - Center of St. Paul's Missionary Work in Greece" in *The Biblical Archaeologist* Vol. 14, No. 4 (Dec. 1951) p.82.

many years leader of the archaeological work at Corinth, feels that despite evidence of new Roman cults, the colonists did in fact restore the worship of most of the ancient gods. As far as language is concerned, McRay<sup>10</sup> acknowledges that between 44 B.C.E. and the reign of Hadrian in the early second century C.E., out of a total of 104 inscriptions, only three were in Greek. However he rightly points out that Greek again became the official language after Hadrian and thus puts forward the view "Yet the Romanization may have been in the administrative and official, rather than the everyday, spheres." In terms of archaeological discovery, it is true that a number of items<sup>11</sup> do suggest a measure of activity during the so-called desolation century - 42 stamped handles from Knidian transport amphorae dated to the period 146-108 B.C.E.; coins deposited in an area under the Roman forum; deeply-rutted road indicating likely long-term usage. Alongside this evidence which suggests possible continuity, we note also the argument of F.C. Grant (1952: 14) that Greek religion was extremely slow to change and survived in many situations right through the Hellenistic and Roman periods.

Against these arguments, a number of scholars have recently advocated a fundamental discontinuity in Corinth and the essentially Roman nature of the refounded city. D.W.J. Gill<sup>12</sup> is one such proponent, emphasizing two pieces of ancient evidence. As recorded in Cicero *Epist. ad Fam. 4.5.4*, Servius Sulpicius Rufus in 45 B.C.E. wrote to Cicero to testify that Corinth was lying desolate and demolished. Pausanias 7.3-6 notes that since the Roman devastation of Corinth, the old local sacrifices are no longer a tradition and the boys no longer cut their hair for Medea's daughters or wear black clothes. Gill draws attention to the Italic architecture of new Corinth and to the fact that the Corinthians' feeling of being Roman was so strong that there was no evidence of a cult of Roma at Corinth before Hadrianic times. The Corinth of Paul's visit was thus very much a Roman city, argues Gill. Such a view is increasingly being endorsed by those archaeologists, like C.K. Williams II, who have long experience and intimate knowledge of the site. Williams notes<sup>13</sup> that the Temple of Apollo was redesigned in Roman style.

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<sup>10</sup> John McRay *Archaeology and the New Testament* Baker Book House, Grand Rapids 1991 p.333.

<sup>11</sup> These finds are recorded by C.K. Williams II "Corinth 1977 Forum South West" in *Hesperia* 47 (1978) pp.21-22.

<sup>12</sup> D.W.J. Gill "Corinth: a Roman Colony in Achaea" in *Biblische Zeitschrift* No. 37 (1993) pp.259-264 esp. 262-264. Gill's Roman position for the essential nature of Corinth is supported strongly by others - Rev. W. Rees "Corinth in St. Paul's Time Part 1 Topography" in *Scripture* 2 (1947) Catholic Biblical Association p.71; H. Cadbury "The Macellum of Corinth" *JBL* Vol. 53 (1934) p.136; Abstract of Mary Hoskins Walbank *The Nature of Early Roman Corinth*. Univ. of Calgary in *AJA* Vol. 90 (1986) pp.220-1.

<sup>13</sup> C.K. Williams II "The Refounding of Corinth: Some Roman Religious Attitudes" in *Roman Architecture in the Greek World* Ed. Sarah Macready & F.H. Thompson. The Society of Antiquarians of London (1987) p.31.

Coin evidence likewise shows that the temple of Aphrodite in Acrocorinth was totally rebuilt by the Romans. Williams suggests a possible, though not certain, change in actual images themselves, at the refounded Aphrodite location. The old function of Aphrodite as armed goddess protecting the city may not have been seen as necessary in Roman colonial times. Thus instead of using a shield as goddess of war and protection, Aphrodite, according to coin evidence, now used it as a mirror to reflect her beauty in her role as goddess of love. Williams concludes ("The Refounding" 1987: 32) that the evidence suggests that the Romans did try to revive the Greek sanctuaries in Corinth but did not really seek to restore them to their original form or to their Greek ritual accompaniments.

Scholarship thus lies in two camps. Gill argues consistently that 1 and 2 Corinthians were addressed to Roman citizens and that "the Romanness of the colony should not be underestimated."<sup>14</sup> Meeks on the other hand, holds the view that claims for the depth of 'romanization' "should not be exaggerated."<sup>15</sup> The two leading archaeologists on site are cautious. Williams warns that the extent of permeation of Greek language and culture prior to 54 C.E. in the new Corinth "still remains to be determined." ("The Refounding" 1987 p.37 n.20). Likewise Prof. Bookidis (Private Letter, 1st October 1992), whilst acknowledging a general consensus on site that "the new city was, indeed, Roman", also particularly warns against imposing Classical and Hellenistic religious practices onto the new Corinth of the first century C.E. In view of the continuing uncertainty, we shall give some prominence to Roman cult, whilst not excluding Greek ritual practice. Stansbury has argued<sup>16</sup> that both strands are crucial to our understanding of mid first century C.E. Corinth, and Oster (1992: 55) wisely points out - "... it would be a grave error to suppose that the inhabitants of colonial Corinth lived in a setting which was mono-cultural and homogenous at the time of nascent Christianity."

### 3.4 THE LOCATIONAL CONTEXT OF 1 COR.8-10

In the entire text of 1 Cor.8-10, Paul provides only two clues to the possible locational context into which he was writing, namely εἰδωλεῖον (8:10) and μάκελλον

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<sup>14</sup> D.W.J. Gill "In Search of the Social Élite in the Corinthian Church" *Tyndale Bulletin* 44.2 (1993) p.327. Elsewhere Gill extends this contention with the claim that in the Roman colony of Corinth, "cult was in essence Roman rather than Greek". See D.W.J. Gill "The Importance of Roman Portraiture for Head-Coverings in 1 Corinthians 11:2-16" in *Tyndale Bulletin* Vol. 41.2 (1990) pp.245-260 esp. p.259.

<sup>15</sup> W.A. Meeks *The First Urban Christians* Yale Univ. Press 1983 p.47.

<sup>16</sup> H. Stansbury *Corinthian Honor, Corinthian Conflict* Ph.D. Thesis. Univ. of California 1990 p.239 and 282. Scholars also need to remind themselves of the extreme slowness of change, and especially so where religious ritual is concerned. E.R. Dodds rightly notes that "Gods withdraw, but their rituals live on, and noone except a few intellectuals notices that they have ceased to mean anything." (*The Greeks and the Irrational* 1951: 243-4).

(10:25). These two phenomena were studied in detail but space allows only a summary of our findings to be presented here, as part of our attempt to identify the cultic context of 1 Cor.8-10.

### 3.4.1 WORD STUDY OF ΕΙΔΩΛΕΙΟΝ

Using Thesaurus Linguae Graecae, a computer search was carried out on the roots εἰδωλεῖ and εἰδῶλι which produced respectively 51 and 56 occurrences across the spectrum of Greek Literature. As expected, however, the vast majority of these occurrences were found in literature composed by authors who lived and wrote after 200 C.E. Apart from the word's single appearance in the New Testament at 1 Cor.8:10, the only pre-200 C.E. evidence for the use of this term was found in five literary works only. The oldest known reference to εἰδωλεῖον occurs in Aesop<sup>17</sup> in the 6th Century B.C.E., although it is doubtful whether the whole corpus is actually of this date. A snake had been trampled on entering the εἰδωλεῖον of Apollo, but Apollo tells the snake that the problem would not have arisen had the snake destroyed the first person to tread on it. Other versions claim that the conversation was actually held between the snake and Zeus, not Apollo.<sup>18</sup>

Alexander himself died at the end of the 4th century B.C.E., but in a document written at a much later date, the History of Alexander the Great records how Alexander found an 'idol's temple' in the high ridges<sup>19</sup> (Recension B, 1.33.1) This occurrence mentions in the same sentence the Sun God, pillars and the hero, but the continuation of the text also states that Alexander was looking for the Temple of Sarapis, following an oracle given to him by Libyan Zeus. Thus we cannot be certain of the temple's identity.

Within the Septuagint there are five occurrences of the term εἰδωλεῖον. Composed in the first century B.C.E., 1 Esdras 2.10 deals with the edict of Cyrus of Persia which ordered the rebuilding of the Jerusalem Temple. The text<sup>20</sup> mentions holy vessels which Nebuchadnezzar had carried away from Jerusalem, and had set up ἐν τῷ ἑστυτοῦ εἰδωλίῳ - "in his temple of idols". A contrast is set up between the Jerusalem

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<sup>17</sup> Aesopus et Aesopica, Fabulae Syntipae philosophi. "The Downtrodden Snake" 18.2. Source: A. Housrath and H. Hunger. Corpus Fabularum Aesopicarum Vols. 1.1 and 1.2 2nd Edn. Leipzig, Teubner 1.1: 1970, 1.2: 1959, 1.1: 1-210, 1.2:1-116 Cod.46077. An interesting piece of work on the Homeric period, although well outside the time of our immediate interest, is that by Rathje - "The Adoption of the Homeric Banquet" in *Symptica* 1990 p.285. She notes recent research which suggests difficulty, for the Homeric period, in distinguishing between domestic and sacred buildings. 'Temples' apparently may well have been converted houses or dining-halls for the holding of sacrifices and sacred meals. According to P. Schmitt-Pantel "Sacrificial Meal and Symposium: Two Models of Civic Institutions in the Archaic City" in *Symptica* 1990 p.19, banquets in the Archaic period could be held in the *oikos* of an individual just as easily as in the buildings of an actual sanctuary.

<sup>18</sup> See *Babrius and Phaedrus* Tr. B.E. Perry LCL, 1965 Appendix p.459 n.198.

<sup>19</sup> Source: L. Bergson Ed. Der griechische Alexanderroman. Rezension B. Stockholm. Almqvist and Wiksell 1965: 1-192 Cod.27,729.

<sup>20</sup> See text in Alfred Rahlfs *Septuaginta*, Stuttgart 1952 - 1 Esdras 2: 7.



Temple and the idol temples of Babylon. Interestingly commercial contracts from all Babylonian periods have shown that these buildings had a function "... altogether apart from the religious sphere," namely as trade centres.<sup>21</sup> Zimmern notes that sacrificial offerings at such temples were variously interpreted - as food/drink for the god, as a substitute for human sacrifice, as simply a temple - due and as means of support for the numerous priests. (ibid.)

The same contrast between the Jerusalem Temple and Babylonian temples occurs in the Septuagint version of Daniel 1.2. The text refers to the act of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, removing some of the Jerusalem Temple vessels and placing them ἐν τῷ εἰδωλίῳ αὐτοῦ - 'in his idol's temple'.<sup>22</sup> The temple of Marduk and its seven-storey ziggurat was believed to be indwelt, in its top chamber, by the god and thus no image<sup>23</sup> was deemed necessary since the god was present. In the chapels and shrines at the base, however, numerous images were placed.

*Bel and the Dragon, 10* is probably of Maccabean date and is an anecdotal conversation between Daniel and King Cyrus of Persia concerning the nature of the Babylonian idol Bel which Daniel claims to be a product of human hands. Cyrus reacts by declaring Bel to be a living god on the grounds that Bel eats and drinks all the daily offerings. Daniel rejects this and the two men then visit the temple. The outcome is the exposure of the priests' deceit in secretly entering the shrine to remove the offerings. The polemical account reaches its climax when Daniel destroys both idol and temple.

A strong polemical context also pervades 1 Maccabees, a product of the early first century B.C.E. Following the ravaging of Jerusalem, Antiochus Epiphanes, ruler of Syria from 175 B.C.E. until 164 B.C.E. and Hellenizer of Jews, gave orders for the setting up of altars and εἰδωλεῖα (1.47) for the sacrificing of swine's flesh and unclean beasts. Many Israelites preferred death to compromise. 10.83 describes Jonathan's capture of the temple of Beth-Dagon and his subsequent destruction of it.

Within the second century C.E. *Acta Joannis*<sup>24</sup> three occurrences of εἰδωλεῖον - at 38.1, 39.9-10 and 44.2 - are centred on what apparently is the temple of Artemis of the Ephesians. John enters, on the birthday of the temple, wearing dark clothes, whilst everyone else had put on white garments. The writer intends to reason with those in the temple as being atheists and 'dead'. The crowd later rushes out, casting down the things left in the temple and declaring its knowledge and worship of John's god. The passage in

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<sup>21</sup> H. Zimmern "Babylonians and Assyrians" in James Hastings Ed. *E.R.E.* Vol. II T & T. Clark 1909 p.318. This admittedly is not a very recent source, but he nevertheless makes a valid and relevant point.

<sup>22</sup> Alfred Rahlfs *Septuaginta* Vol.II Stuttgart 1952 p.871 Codex Syro-Hexaplaris Ambrosianus.

<sup>23</sup> A.H. Sayce *The Religions of Ancient Egypt and Babylonia* T. & T. Clark 1903 p.456.

<sup>24</sup> Ed. M. Bonnet *Acta Apostolorum Apocrypha* Vol. 2.1 Leipzig. Mendelssohn 1898. Repr. Hildesheim: Olms 1972, 151-215.

Herodian and Pseudo-Herodian,<sup>25</sup> *Partitiones* 268.17 compares word endings of words such as εἰδῶλιον and εἰδωλεῖον, but this occurrence gives us no help in understanding the concrete context of εἰδωλεῖον, in terms of any identifiable situation or location.

As expected, the Septuagint and early Christian texts portray a polemical interest but the occurrences of εἰδωλεῖον as a whole reveal a wide spectrum of possible temple situations - Apollo, Zeus, heroes, Sun-God, Sarapis, Marduk, Beth-Dagon, Bel and Artemis. In view of such a wide spectrum, a computer search was then initiated to examine all occurrences of -εῖον and -πεῖον endings in the writings of Plutarch, Lucian, Pausanias and Strabo, in an attempt to locate the temples of specific gods in Greek literature. At least 17 of these word usages in Plutarch were the term τᾶμιεῖον - 'public treasury' - but reference was also made to the temple of Saturn as a treasury<sup>26</sup>; to the temple of Asclepius<sup>27</sup>; to the temple of Serapis<sup>28</sup>; and to the place<sup>29</sup> where departed souls received sacrifices - ψῦχοπομπεῖον. Out of the four occurrences of -εῖον in Lucian's writings<sup>30</sup> three of them are references to the Ἀσκληπιεῖον. All but two of Pausanias' nine uses of -εῖον endings concern Ἀσκληπιεῖον including reference to the Corinthian location, with its dual image of Pan seated and Artemis standing [*Corinth* 10.2.9] and to Titane, where it is said that Alexanor, the son of Machaon, the son of Asclepius, came to Sicyonia and built the sanctuary of Asclepius at Titana [*Corinth* 11.6.1]. The latter's perceived descent recalls the divine/human ambiguity of the origins of Torajanese people. Pausanias also describes a temple called the Μητροῦον ('Metroium') which contained no image of the Mother of the gods but which did contain statues of Roman emperors. [*Elis* I, 20.9.7]. In Strabo's writings, three out of ten occurrences of -εῖον endings concerned Asclepius. Strabo's use of -πεῖον indicates the presence of Pan, Artemis and Sarapis. Also on several occasions, the term Ὀλυμπιεῖον - the precinct of Zeus - is used by a number of authors.

We note therefore a very wide range of possible contexts for Paul's εἰδωλεῖον. The diversity of usage over time and space is considerable and we are forced to conclude that Paul's term εἰδωλεῖον in 1 Cor.8:10 could refer to any location/building in which some people reclined and ate food together. We cannot dogmatically assert the specific nature of the temple(s) or cult(s) which Paul intended when he wrote his letter to the

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<sup>25</sup> Ed. J.F. Boissonade *Herodiani partitiones* London 1819 Repr. Amsterdam: Hakkert 1963, 1-282. Cod: 33,279.

<sup>26</sup> Plutarch, *Lives: Publicola* 12.2.5.

<sup>27</sup> Plutarch, *Moralia: The Roman Questions* 286 D.7.

<sup>28</sup> Plutarch, *Lives: Alexander* 76.4.

<sup>29</sup> Plutarch, *Moralia: The Divine Vengeance* 555.C.8

<sup>30</sup> Lucian, *The Dead Come To Life* or *The Fisherman* 42.3; *Demonax* 27.2; *Hermotimus* 37.6.

Corinthian Church, although divinities with underworld associations occurred frequently in these word studies.

### 3.4.2 THE LOCATION OF THE CORINTHIAN MARKET

Two fragmentary Latin inscriptions from Corinth are dated from the reign of Augustus and each makes reference to the building of a *macellum*<sup>31</sup> in Corinth. West<sup>32</sup> records details of No.124 which names the 'MACELLVM' and No.125 which reads 'macellum .... cum piSCARIO et bilac...' These two inscriptions are either the same or similar in wording. The *Peribolos* of Apollo, according to West, was similar in construction details to the *Macellum Piscarium* and both were constructed around the same time. Thus No.124 may well be assignable to the *Peribolos* of Apollo. Kent has republished the inscription No.124 (West) with three new fragments and the text now reads 'MACELLVM... cum ...ET. Plscario...' (Kent, 321).

As early as 1930, F.J. de Waele had claimed that a *forum piscarium* could be identified with the ruins of a fish market north of the Roman basilica at Corinth (1930: 453-4). Stillwell, however, then showed that the construction date of the market north of the basilica was later than the date of the inscription.<sup>33</sup> Nabers continued the debate in 1969, with reference to No.125 (West), by suggesting that *bilacus* could well refer to the sorts of tanks and cisterns suited to fish selling but that it would have been a needless duplication to dedicate both a *macellum* and a *forum piscarium* at the same time and by the same persons.<sup>34</sup> He concludes that we have duplicate dedicatory inscriptions naming benefactors who wanted their contribution to be recorded. He thus sees the 'fish market' as probably a part of the *macellum*, rather than an independent structure.

Recently D.W.J. Gill has echoed the argument put forward by Nabers and has translated the inscription No.321 (Kent). He lists the names of the benefactors and concludes his translation -

[built?] the meatmarket [...] along with [...] and facilities for fish [...].<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> *Macellum*, is the Latin term for a general provision market, including such items as meat, fish, fruit and bread, and Ned Nabers has argued that such a market was unknown in Greece and Asia Minor before the Roman period. See N. Nabers "The Architectural Variations of the *macellum*" *Opuscula Romana* 9, 20, 1973 p.173 n.4 and p.175. The Roman identity of this market is argued also by earlier scholars such as F.J. de Waele: "The Roman Market North of the Temple at Corinth" *AJA* 2nd Series. Vol.34 (1930) p.435 and Henry J. Cadbury "The *macellum* of Corinth" in *JBL* Vol.53 (1934) p.135.

<sup>32</sup> A.B. West Ed. *Corinth: Latin Inscriptions 1896-1926* Vol.VIII Pt.II ASCSA 1931.

<sup>33</sup> H.N. Fowler and R. Stillwell *Corinth I: Introduction, Topography, Architecture* (Camb. Mass. 1932) 146.

<sup>34</sup> Ned Nabers "A Note on Corinth VIII, Pt.II No.125" in *AJA* Vol.73 (1969) pp.73-4.

<sup>35</sup> D.W.J. Gill "The Meat-Market at Corinth (1 Corinthians 10:25)" *Tyndale Bulletin* 43.2 (1992) p.390.

Gill feels that since the Corinthian *macellum* had fish facilities, then it probably took a colonnaded form of building, perhaps with a *tholos* in the central area. ("The Meat Market" 1992: 393). However according to Ward-Perkins, the North Market at Corinth was of Pompeian type without a *tholos*.<sup>36</sup> A *tholos* was a rotunda or round building with a conical roof. At Athens the *Prytaneis*, or Presidents of the State Administration, dined daily in the *tholos*. The *tholos* has also been defined as a vaulted kitchen or storage place for utensils.

Ultimately, however, although the actual location of the *macellum* may well lie in the area around the Lechaion Road, nevertheless the fact remains that this market "has yet to be identified with certainty..." (Gill "The Meat Market" 1992: 392). More significant still, however, is Cadbury's pessimism in 1934 that future excavations may not reveal the location of the *macellum* "nor satisfy our curiosity as to how far, when Paul recalled his first visit at Corinth in 50-51 C.E., the associations of the word in his mind would be with an 'idol's house' or an 'idol's table' and the actual sacrificial ceremony, and how far merely with a meat-and-provision market." (1934: 141). Clearly some at least of the meat available in the *macellum* was viewed by Paul as sacrificial in origin, (1 Cor.10:25) but archaeological work on the *macellum* fails to take us much beyond this.

### 3.5 ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE FOR CORINTHIAN CULTS

#### 3.5.1 THE CULT OF DEMETER AND KORE

That dining flourished at the Sanctuary of Demeter and Kore in Classical and Hellenistic Corinth is agreed by scholars. Located on an incline on the north slope of Acrocorinth, the dining rooms occupied the lower half, whilst the cult areas - sacrificial pit, theatre and temple - were concentrated in the upper half. Bookidis ("Ritual Dining" 1990: 87) has identified 52 dining complexes at this Sanctuary from late 6th to 2nd Centuries B.C.E. Usually each dining room contained 7 or 8 couches which varied considerably in length even within a single room. A few buildings provide evidence of table foundations<sup>37</sup> but portable wooden tables might have been the norm elsewhere. (Bookidis "Ritual Dining" 1990: 88). Bookidis feels that the wide range of cooking pots found there suggests a variety of foods under preparation. Of considerable interest is Bookidis' point that in late 5th or early 4th Century B.C.E., at least 30 rooms were functioning, serving around 200-240 people, which represents 2½-3 times the number which could have been contained in the theatre where initiatory acts were performed. (1990: 90 n.30). Thus there appears to have been physical separation between the relatively large number of diners and the smaller number possibly involved in ritual acts.

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<sup>36</sup> J.B. Ward-Perkins "From Republic to Empire: Reflections on the early provincial architecture of the Roman West". *JRS* 60 (1970) 15-16, 18 fig.19.

<sup>37</sup> Preliminary publication in M. Goldstein *The Setting of the Ritual Meal in Greek Sanctuaries*. Diss. 1978 Berkeley University. Ann Arbor 1980 p.176-8.

There is therefore a possibility of separation physically - and thus perhaps 'spiritually' in the eyes of attenders - between eating area and sacrificial area. However, the difficulty of distinguishing between sacrificial use of artefacts, and their everyday use, is acute and archaeologists remain uncertain whether the Corinthian red-figured pottery from the Demeter Sanctuary is votive or utilitarian.<sup>38</sup> One or two rooms at the West End had benches rather than couches and Bookidis feels it likely that "the bench room was used for some ritual related to but distinct from the meal, something involving conversation or explanation." (1990: 91). Again we see a possible distinction between eating and ritual. Regarding actual offerings at Demeter and Kore, 40 statues of boys usually carrying animals have been found.<sup>39</sup> These statues may depict a particular group of votaries or male attendants, presumably a relatively small number of actual sacrificers. Bookidis however asks a pertinent question - "whether they were real Corinthians who participated in the ritual, or mythical people?" (1990:91). Pigs' bones have been found in sacrificial pit B (Stroud 1965: 8-10) but the discovery of classical grinding stones and mortars does indicate a likely preponderance of fruit and cereals, boiled, stewed or raw.

In spite of this material evidence, however, two issues still require comment, namely the possible extent of this cultic activity at Corinth in the first century C.E. and the nature of cult during that period. On the basis of pottery deposits, Slane concludes that "This quantity of material seems insufficient to demonstrate that the Sanctuary was in use before the middle of the 1st Century."<sup>40</sup> Most Roman lamps and pottery from the Demeter Sanctuary can be dated between the mid-first century C.E. and the third quarter of the 4th Century C.E. Cooking certainly is evidenced in the Roman sanctuary, but few of the lamps and very little of the pottery in the Roman period appear to have been votive and most of the lamps were found in an open area. It appears therefore that there may have been a change in cult practice in Roman times. We cannot assume that the practices continued unaltered from the Greek into the Roman periods. Slane concludes somewhat pessimistically that there was little if anything actually functioning at Demeter and Kore before the third quarter of the 1st Century C.E.

In a joint report,<sup>41</sup> Bookidis and Stroud argue that new buildings were constructed in the Sanctuary in the second half of the first century C.E., thus rendering it uncertain as to whether the cult was actively functioning when Paul wrote 1 Corinthians. In Pausanias'

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<sup>38</sup> E.G. Pemberton *Corinth Vol.18 Pt. 1* ASCSA 1989 p.136.

<sup>39</sup> See Stroud R.S. 1965 "The Sanctuary of Demeter and Kore in Acrocorinth: Prelim. Report 1" in *Hesperia* 34 (1965) pl. 3d; Prelim. Rep. 2 in *Hesperia* 37 (1968) pl.95 c-e; Bookidis and Fisher 1972 Prelim Report 4 in *Hesperia* 41 (1972) pl.63.

<sup>40</sup> K.W. Slane *Corinth Vol.18 Pt.2 The Sanctuary of Demeter and Kore.: The Roman Pottery and Lamps*. ASCSA 1990 p.5.

<sup>41</sup> N. Bookidis and R.S. Stroud *Demeter and Persephone in Ancient Corinth* ASCSA Princeton, New Jersey 1987 p.11.

report around 160 C.E. cult statues of the goddesses were not accessible to public view, having been located in the three small, one-room temples laid out in the late 1st Century C.E. The marble statues and offering tables were destroyed finally in the late 4th Century C.E. Stroud himself in a recent article<sup>42</sup> believes that the extreme paucity of excavated objects datable between about 146-44 B.C.E. suggests a sharp break between Greek and Roman phases at Demeter. Although lamp and pottery evidence became prominent only after the mid first century C.E., nevertheless coin evidence from Augustus and Tiberius' reigns suggests that the Demeter sanctuary may have been revived fairly soon after the refounding of Corinth. Indeed it is the evidence of these earlier coins and some ritual vessels which makes Bookidis willing to say "...I believe there was sacrifice there in the first half of the century [first C.E.]; but the earliest Roman buildings go up in the third or early fourth quarter." (Private Letter 1st October 1992). Thus although Bookidis contends that the dining rooms at Demeter and Kore in Corinth "are all filled in by the Early Roman period and clearly abandoned", (ibid), and that "there is no architectural evidence of anything having taken their place", nevertheless, "a good deal of cooking ware was found in Roman levels; if this means dining, then it took place in no identifiable setting". (ibid.) Stroud agrees that in Roman times, there were no longer small groups of segregated worshippers for indoor dining in the former Greek fashion. (1993: 69). He thus allows the possibility of open air communal dining<sup>43</sup> in Roman times. However, Stroud found no clear evidence in the Roman phase of Demeter for pits or altars for animal sacrifice. Perhaps the form of sacrifice had changed or the eating was occurring without the visible accompaniment of an actual sacrifice. We cannot be certain.

As regards knowledge of cultic ritual itself, Bookidis is somewhat despondent. She confesses (1990: 87)

At Corinth we know very little about the cult [of Demeter and Kore] since inscriptions are almost wholly lacking and literary sources are meagre.

She continues in like vein to express the frustrating situation by admitting that "The greatest question of all, however, what the worshippers did and said once in the rooms, we shall never be able to answer." (1990: 93) Despite this apparent despair, however, Bookidis has said that dining may still have been practised there in some form in the first half of the first century C.E. Moreover Bookidis and Fisher (1972: 299) report a building T, containing several dining halls, being rebuilt and used in Roman times, and a clear

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<sup>42</sup> R.S. Stroud "The Sanctuary of Demeter on Acrocorinth in the Roman period" in "The Corinthia in the Roman Period" *J.R. Arch. Supplementary Series No.8* Ed. T.E. Gregory. Ann Arbor. MI. 1993.

<sup>43</sup> The possibility of dining in tents, or even in the open, has been raised by J. Murphy O'Connor "The Corinth that Saint Paul Saw" *Biblical Archaeologist* Vol. 47 (1984) p.152; and also by J. McRay *Archaeology and the N.T.: Ch.10 Corinth and Rome* Baker Book House, Grand Rapids 1991 p.316, following personal conversation at the American School in Athens, 11th Apr. 1988. (page 402 n.31).

succession of strata was evidenced in it ranging from classical to late Roman periods. Last, but certainly not least, Bookidis and Stroud (1987: 30) report the discovery of eleven important leaden curse tablets which Bookidis believes may have an important bearing on the Roman functioning of the Demeter cult. These thin pieces of lead were found rolled up and pierced by iron nails, having been buried under the floor of a Roman building in the late 1st century C.E. The writer of these inscribed tablets calls upon the underworld gods to punish the target of the curse. The intended victim is named but the identity of the writer is seldom revealed and the reason for the curse is stated only in vague terms. The eleven tablets discovered in Demeter's sanctuary are all directed against women, three tablets cursing the same woman, Karpile Babbia, a weaver of garlands, with pleas addressed to Hermes of the Underworld, to Earth and to the children of the Earth for her destruction, as well as consignment "to the Fates who exact justice." The writer accuses this woman of "acts of insolence." Bookidis and Stroud (1987: 30) pass the comment that "In the dining rooms, on the stone staircase, and in front of the sacrificial pits in this sanctuary we come into direct contact with the setting of an old and very popular cult."

It has emerged among archaeologists that there may be a link between the Demeter site at Corinth and worship of Dionysus. R.S. Stroud has noted, regarding the Greek period of the Sanctuary, that terracotta theatrical masks and other objects found in excavations suggest the real possibility of worship of Dionysus at this location. (1933: 68). J. McRay argues that dining may have been linked with sexual immorality partly on the grounds that worship of Demeter was closely associated with Dionysus. (1991: 316). Recent consideration of this possible connection has been offered by Hutchinson<sup>44</sup> who describes Bacchus as an "astonishingly adaptable god, one who had the potential to be almost all things to all people...". This cult had particularly strong links with burial locations (1991: 223). Bacchic Reliefs were mostly of Roman Imperial date and Hutchinson quotes the work of B. Hundsatz<sup>45</sup> who on the one hand argues that the meaning of such reliefs to Romans should not be over-estimated, yet on the other hand acknowledges that they were believed to bring good fortune to the owner. Hundsatz argues that purchase of Bacchic reliefs was as much a matter of fashion as of religion. She contends that "Der Dionysoskult war... kein Privileg der gehobenen Schicht sondern jedern zugänglich." (p.115) Presumably a range of perspectives existed on this cult. Paul Veyne<sup>46</sup> has even argued that Roman commoners "never worshipped this god "and that he

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<sup>44</sup> Valeric J. Hutchinson "The Cult of Dionysos/Bacchus in the Graeco-Roman world: new light from archaeological studies". *J.R. Arch.* Vol.4 (1991) pp.222-230 esp. p.222.

<sup>45</sup> B. Hundsatz *Das Dionysische Schmuckrelief*. Tuduv-Studien, Reihe Archäologie Band 1, München 1987, p.97, 109 and 115. My translation of the quotation from page 115 is as follows- "The cult of Dionysus was not a privilege of the sophisticated stratum but available to everyone."

<sup>46</sup> Paul Veyne *A History of Private Life 1. From Pagan Rome to Byzantium*. Cambridge MA, 1987, p.191, 192 and 222.

was at best "a consoling 'maybe' about whom everyone has heard." Hutchinson concludes that Bacchus had a very powerful hold on the ancient imagination (1991: 230) which may have actually increased in the Roman imperial era. The frequent honouring of Bacchus out-of-doors or in temporary structures would certainly fit the situation at the Corinthian Demeter site. As far as the perspective of the worshipper was concerned, we note with interest Hutchinson's comment (1991: 230 n 35).

Moreover, there is no reason to assume that the act of drinking a toast to the god, or of setting up his image in one's house or garden, was inherently any less 'religious' than was participation in mystic rites. We probably need to guard against projecting Judaeo-Christian ideals of religious commitment onto followers of Bacchus.

Thus the issue of whether or not the Demeter and Kore sanctuary was actively functioning in Corinth around 50 C.E. is somewhat problematic and uncertain, and therefore remains unresolved. Demeter cannot be unreservedly affirmed as a backcloth to 1 Cor.8-10, but neither can she be rejected out of hand.

### 3.5.2 THE CULT OF ASKLEPIOS

We shall seek to assess the Asklepios site from a number of key angles - the structure of the complex, the dining rooms themselves and the period of its functioning over time.

According to the main report by Carl Roebuck<sup>47</sup> the site of the Asklepieion lay north of the city and adjoining the city wall. The complex was developed in the late 4th century B.C.E. and the healing-cult reached its full growth in the Hellenistic period. The sanctuary precinct itself was built on a hill, adjacent to the Lerna precinct in a hollow. A link building between these two parts was in the form of an *abaton*, one storey high on the edge of the hill and two storeys from the lower level of Lerna. The southern wing of this *abaton* contained a lustral room for cult ritual, supplied by a water system. The hollow of Lerna developed as a fountain house and resort, and "opening from the east side was a row of three dining rooms which occupied the first floor of the *abaton*" (Roebuck 1951: 24), a second floor room probably functioning for the rite of incubation. The Report (p.24) concludes that the whole complex seems to have been constructed as a unity in a single complex. The Report suggests that originally, Lerna was probably seen to some degree as the secular part of the complex with more general usages of buildings, whereas the temple and sacred buildings constituted the other part of the complex. Although the precinct did have its own water supply for lustral purposes, the Report (p.25) maintains that patients also probably made use of the Lerna supplies, the latter being, in all likelihood, a public supply. Thus the public character of Lerna seems to have increased in the Roman period and Pausanias [2, 4, 5] does not seem to view the resort of Lerna as a

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<sup>47</sup> Carl Roebuck *Corinth Vol. 14 The Asklepieion and Lerna* ASCSA Princeton N.J. 1951.



part of the Asklepieion. The dining rooms, located between the temple precinct and the Lerna precinct, thus remain somewhat ambiguous in function, perhaps 'religious', perhaps 'secular', though such a distinction in the ancient world is highly dubious anyway, in much the same way that it is in modern Torajanese society today.

Detailed work has been done on the dining rooms themselves. Couches appear to have been quite permanent, but table supports and tops tended to be movable in early Roman times. The Report (p.54-5) suggests that "the rooms seem to have continued in use throughout the Roman period and it is possible that the reference of Pausanias to the *Kathedrai* of Lerna refers to these couches." [Paus.2, 4,5]. In the upper storey of the *abaton*, entered from the precinct, was the sacred part of the building used for incubation. In the lower storey were the dining rooms opening from the colonnades where visitors sought rest and refreshment during the day. The possibility thus arises that some of the users of the dining rooms may have been visitors to the recreational facilities rather than serious partakers of religious ritual. No kitchen has been found but perhaps food was cooked in the open air in the court. Once again, we are in the realm of possibilities rather than certainties, of conjectures rather than convictions. Although the Asklepieion at Corinth provides evidence of a clear ground plan and although many classical anatomical dedications have been found, nevertheless it is devoid of inscriptions recording cures or thank-offerings, and lacks both contemporary literary sources and sculptured reliefs, which might have thrown light on the ritual of the cult or the administration of the sanctuary.<sup>48</sup> On the basis of accounts of the cult of Asklepios elsewhere, it seems that patients could either attend the Asklepieia themselves or deputize others in their stead. Ritual involved a sequence of sacrifice, purification by bathing, sleeping in the *abaton* and appearance of the god either to cure or to prescribe treatment. The sacrifice would have been made at the altar and prior to sleeping, the patient would have visited the temple in which the cult images of Asklepios and Hygieia were placed. In the dining room, a special diet may have been provided for certain patients and meals for others. (*Roebuck Report* 1951: 158). However because the dining rooms served visitors both to the shrine and to Lerna (Lang 1977: 11-12), the very real possibility arises that many who ate in these dining rooms had never actually been involved in sacrificial offerings.

In seeking to assess this evidence, we shall consider three scholars' viewpoints, leaving aside the somewhat flowery and embellished description by Murphy O'Connor (1984: 156), for we agree with J. McRay that the former "probably squeezes more out of the dining experience as a background for Paul's discussion of eating meat offered to idols (1 Cor.8) than the situation would allow." (1991: 322). R. Oster, whilst presenting no detailed material, argues that some temple dining halls such as those of Asklepios, were used for non-cultic ceremonies. (1992: 66). Thus he argues that monotheistic believers

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<sup>48</sup> See Report by C. Roebuck 1951: 152 and the more recent publication by Mabel Lang *Cure and Cult in Ancient Corinth: A Guide to the Asklepieion*. ASCSA Princeton, New Jersey. 1977 p.8-9.

could attend such non-cultic events. (1 Cor.8:10). We object, however, to a distinction between 'non-cultic' events in Ch.8 and 'cultic' ones in Ch.10 for the text itself does not seem to invite such a differentiation. After all, both passages speak about eating in a temple context. Indeed, food sacrificed to idols receives more emphasis in Ch.8 than it does in 1 Cor.10:14-22. Moreover we would question Oster's reference to the "apparent freedoms granted by Paul in 1 Cor.8" (1992: 65) and in any case, we argue that a distinction between 'secular' and 'sacred', 'non-cultic' and 'cultic' was difficult, if not impossible, to make. The valid contribution which Oster does make is on the whole issue of how hard it is to know how the ancients perceived their offerings of human genital clay votives, whether as requests to heal venereal disease or as pleas for restored fertility, or indeed as Lang argues (1977: 23) as a mark of gratitude for a return of potency. C.K. Williams (1987: 34) contends that although the Romans did repair and restore the court and temple of Asklepios nevertheless "apparently, the dining rooms of the original cult were obliterated." The temple dated<sup>49</sup> by a painted inscription on the epistyle of the temple to around 25 B.C.E., was restored to its original Greek style. Thus on such a dating, the Greek dining rooms would have been non-existent in the mid first century C.E. Bookidis states (Private Letter Oct. 1992) that the cult itself functioned in the Roman period but that as for functioning dining rooms in the first half of the 1st Century C.E., there were "possibly none". However she goes on to stress that this "does not necessarily negate Sanctuary dining in the Roman period." Dining may have occurred in unidentifiable settings, but this uncertainty compels us at least to consider the possibility of a non-Greek context and it is to this that we now turn.

### 3.5.3 THE EGYPTIAN CULTS OF ISIS AND SARAPIS

Archaeological data<sup>50</sup> helped to establish that Egyptian deities were worshipped in Corinth<sup>51</sup> from the time of the Hellenistic period.<sup>52</sup> A number of pieces of evidence have become available. At Cenchreae, the eastern port of Corinth, a first century C.E. temple, probably to the Egyptian deities, has been excavated<sup>53</sup> and it is to this goddess Isis at Cenchreae that the 2nd Century C.E. Latin author Apuleius [*Metamorphoses* Bk II]

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<sup>49</sup> J.H. Kent *Corinth: The Inscriptions* 1966: no.311 p.123.

<sup>50</sup> Pausanias 2.4.6 does record two sacred precincts of Isis and two of Sarapis on his ascent of Acrocorinth in the city of Corinth itself. No remains have yet been found but a small tripod base does suggest their possible location in an unexcavated area at the foot of the hill.

<sup>51</sup> The existence of a sanctuary of Isis at Cenchreae is attested by Pausanias 2.2.3 in the late 2nd century C.E.

<sup>52</sup> See for example D.E. Smith "The Egyptian Cults at Corinth" *HTR* 70 (1977) 201-231.

<sup>53</sup> R. Scranton *The Harbour-Side Sanctuaries, A. The S.W. End of Roman Harbor - Isis, Kenchreai, Eastern Port of Corinth Vol. 1 Topography and Architecture* by R. Scranton, J.W. Shaw and L. Ibrahim, Leiden 1978, 53-78.

attributed his own conversion. Milleker has noted that although the Sanctuary of Isis and Sarapis in Corinth itself has not yet actually been found, nevertheless there are several representations of the god Sarapis<sup>54</sup> which might suggest his popularity there. Likewise the popularity of Isis in Greece in the Roman period is indicated by the fact that at Athens, over one third of all the known funerary reliefs of the Roman era show women adorned in the dress of the goddess Isis.<sup>55</sup> Once again therefore we see the underworld associations of Corinthian deities.

Two specifically Corinthian inscriptions have been found. One was found in 1965 in a manhole 400 metres below the sanctuary of Demeter at the foot of Acrocorinth. It is dated<sup>56</sup> to about 3rd to 2nd century B.C.E. and reads "Philotis (daughter of) Philonidas, to Sarapis (and) Isis". A second inscription was discovered in 1929 on a fragment of column at the theatre near Acrocorinth. Dating is around the mid first century C.E. and it records "Gaius Julius Syrus dedicated (this column) to Isis and Serapis."<sup>57</sup>

R.E. Oster (1992: 61) tried recently to argue for the sacral celibacy of Isis and Sarapis as probable background to the issues of 1 Cor.7:1-5. He argues that once we have established the presence of Isis in Julio-Claudian Corinth by archaeology, then we can legitimately use other pagan sources to enlarge our picture of the cult. Such a view, we argue, is feasible but requires caution and careful handling. In addition to the archaeological evidence for Isis and Sarapis in Corinth, we have a number of meal-invitations of this cult, particularly in the Oxyrhynchus series. These we shall examine in our search for the nature and significance of sacrifice and eating in the Greco-Roman world.

### 3.5.4 THE CULTS OF THE DEAD AND HEROES

This is perhaps the most difficult area of our investigation and one which demands considerable caution, for as Broneer<sup>58</sup> noted half a century ago -

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<sup>54</sup> E.J. Milleker "Three Heads of Serapis from Corinth" *Hesperia* 54 (1985) pp.121-135.

<sup>55</sup> D.W.J. Gill "Chapter 4: Behind the Classical Façade: Local Religions of the Roman Empire". *One God and One Lord: Christianity in a World of Religious Pluralism*. Grand Rapids and Carlisle, Baker and Paternoster. Ed. A.D. Clarke & B.W. Winter 1991 pp.74-5.

<sup>56</sup> Daux, Georges "Chronique des fouilles" 1965 in *Bulletin de correspondance hellénique* 90 (1966) 754-6 esp. photograph on p.757.

<sup>57</sup> J.H. Kent *Corinth: The Inscriptions 1926-1950* ASCSA Vol.8 Pt. 3 1966 No.57 p.33. This inscription, according to Kent is the first epigraphical confirmation of the existence of the cults at Corinth - there were two temples of Isis and two of Sarapis in Roman Corinth.

<sup>58</sup> O. Broneer "Hero Cults in the Corinthian Agora". *Hesperia* Vol. 11 (1942) p.160. Writing more recently, S.C. Humphreys sees additional complexity with regard to the world of the dead - "It will be clear by now that it is difficult in most cultures to locate the dead unambiguously in one place. They are simultaneously in the remains of their bodies, in their commemorative monuments and in some other place to which their spirits go." See "Death and Time" p.274 in *Mortality and Immortality* Ed. S.C. Humphreys & H. King 1981.

To those who are satisfied with nothing short of conclusive proof and unambiguous statements concerning the nature of the cults the results will seem meagre indeed.

He points out that such hero cults in any case were often "merged with the worship of one or more of the major deities" (ibid), quoting the example of a cult involving the horse-and-rider motive and the name Zeuxippos which indicate a central role for the horse. Broneer claims that this sepulchral cult was probably connected with the worship of Poseidon Hippios and Athena Hippiia. Broneer also makes reference to the fact that as the original physical objects of the cult disappeared, so the "original reason for the festival would fade into oblivion". (1942: 161) Scope for conflicting perspective and interpretation would presumably be considerable. Thus Broneer admits that, during the century of so-called desolation in Corinth, many of the lesser sanctuaries fell into decay or some into abandonment, but he goes on to assert that "... religious beliefs lie too deeply rooted in the human consciousness to disappear<sup>59</sup> during the course of three generations" (p.153). He argues that hero cult may well have been revived after 44 B.C.E., "even if its original nature and significance was no longer apparent". (ibid.). For example, we have already seen that Paus.2, 3,7 claimed the cessation, following the destruction of Corinth, of heroic sacrifices in honour of the children of Medea, even though the tomb and the image of Terror still remained. However, Aelian, writing<sup>60</sup> around the close of the second century C.E., claimed the opposite, namely the continuation of the cult. We believe that although Kennedy<sup>61</sup> has probably overstated his case for the cult of the dead as the backcloth to 1

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<sup>59</sup> M. Nilsson writes in a similar vein when he argues that "Christianity easily swept away the great-gods, but the minor daemons of popular belief offered a stubborn resistance. They were nearer the living rock". *Greek Folk Religion* Harper Torchbooks 1961 p.16. Whilst we would argue for the great slowness of changes in religious beliefs for both the ancient Corinthian *and* modern Torajanese situations, nevertheless we recognize the danger of drawing direct parallels between the two. This is especially so in the realm of the dead, where differences do indeed exist and where further research is undoubtedly needed. In a recent article ("Contesting the Past: Hero Cult, Tomb Cult and Epic in Early Greece" *AJA* 98 (1994) p.400-1) C.M. Antonaccio makes the intriguing claim that in the historical period, the cult of ancestors involved 'memorialism' rather than ancestor worship. S.C. Humphreys (1981: 270) maintains that the Greeks wanted to gain perpetual remembrance and to retain a sense of kin closeness already experienced in life. Thus the Greek dead did not become ancestors and did not affect the lives of their descendants. They "became *monuments*." However Humphreys then claims (1981: 271) that, from the 4th Century B.C.E. onwards, cult was offered only to the nuclear family (of the funerary cult founder) "who become more or less assimilated to divinities." The door to ambiguity was indeed open.

<sup>60</sup> See Aelian *Varia Historia* Bk.5 Ch.21 in the work of Johannem du Vivie and Isaacum Severinum MDCCI p.402-3.

<sup>61</sup> Charles A. Kennedy has argued that the background to 1 Cor.8-10 is the memorial offerings and meals to the deceased. "The Cult of the Dead in Corinth" in *Love and Death in the Ancient Near East. Essays in Honour of Marvin H. Pope* Ed. John Marks and Robert M. Good. Four Quarters Publishing Company, Connecticut, USA, 1987 esp. pp.229-230. Kennedy argues that the temples of 1 Cor.8:10 were not those of Olympian gods but of tombs. We do not reject Kennedy's argument, but suggest that the cult of the dead may well be one, rather than the only, ingredient of a complexity of cultic backgrounds to 1 Cor.8-10. Certainly we know of funerals in the Roman World at which pigs were slaughtered [Cicero; *De Legibus* 2.22]; of images of the dead which were made; and of tombs which could have the appearance of 'temples'. [Clem. of Alex. Prot. 4. 44 & Paus. 2.25.7].

Cor.8-10, nevertheless we cannot too readily dismiss the world of the dead as a relevant factor, not only in view of Broneer's contention (1942: 159 n.92) that "... fertility rites and the worship of the dead are often joined in the same cult", but also particularly because of the recent discovery of curse tablets at the Demeter Sanctuary in Corinth. Whilst worship of pagan deities might have seemed a somewhat unacceptable practice for Christians, the veneration of the dead, perhaps through effigies or portraits, may well have been a more ambiguous issue.

As far as actual archaeological evidence is concerned, excavations of the Forum area of Corinth have revealed a building which seems to have included dining rooms and facilities<sup>62</sup> which may have involved possibly chthonic cult practices, requiring funeral meals. In Corinthian hero reliefs, Broneer notes a variety of opinions regarding the reclining figures. Some view the reclining male as a divine figure ruling the realm of the dead; others hold to a more common interpretation where the reclining figure represents the hero or heroized dead accompanied by his wife seated beside him. Broneer (1942: 133) doubts however, that this scene portrays a family meal. A consensus does exist in scholarship that the snake represents the soul of the dead and the scene thus occurs in the lower world in the context of chthonic worship. Thus, linked together with banquets, sacrifices and games, hero worship, argues Broneer, was a real component of chthonic worship in the Classical period in Corinth. (1942: 149).

With regard to Roman domestic religion, detailed consideration of Orr's work is beyond the scope of our research, but he does nevertheless make several points of considerable importance and relevance. The purpose of such domestic cult was to seek the special protection of particular deities or *numina*. The cult was flexible partly because there existed no priestly college or written dogma. Help was sought from the *Penates*, who were the State gods protecting the hegemony of Rome, and from the *Lares*. Some argue that the *Lares* were originally gods of the fields but others claim that they were deified ancestors worshipped at the hearth. (1978: 1564). Thus we see potential for ambiguity concerning identity, and Orr contends that "to the Romans, it was enough that they had power and it did not matter much how it was evolved and where it was directed." (1978: 1564). Complexity is compounded further when we realize that the Roman Emperor, state and Roman people all had their own particular *Genius*, the attendant and

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<sup>62</sup> C.K. Williams II and Joan E. Fisher "Corinth 1971: Forum Area" in *Hesperia* 41.2 (1972) p.164. In a later work - "The City of Corinth and Its Domestic Religion" *Hesperia* 50 (1981) pp.408-421 - C.K. Williams II lists evidence of archaeological finds, from Classical and Hellenistic periods, of shrines set in the open air, marked by statues raised high on tall shafts. Blocks have been found in small domestic enclosures and Williams suggests that these may have served to support offering tables. Evidence of figurines of reclining banqueters has also been uncovered from shrines. Williams concludes that for the Classical and Hellenistic periods, domestic cult for the heroes, gods and departed ancestors was particularly strong in Corinth. Unfortunately archaeologists are not yet in a position to claim the widespread continuation of such cult into the Roman era. However, although there is no treatise on the subject as a whole, D.G. Orr has argued persuasively for the survival of Roman domestic cult over centuries - see "Roman Domestic Religion: The Evidence of the Household Shrines" in *ANRW* 2.16.2 (1978) pp.1557-1591.

protecting spirit, and that "the *Genius* was a religious idea that could accommodate a great variety of roles." (1978: 1575). Thus according to Orr, the *Lares* and *Genius* statuettes could testify to the presence of the imperial cult, but "the two cults could operate as mutually acceptable religious functions." (1978: 1589) Ovid (*Fasti* 5.129) noted the *Lares praestites*, which looked after the imperial cult, but he appears to make a distinction between *Lares* and *the gods*. Moreover, Horace (*Epistles* 2.2.188) describes the *Genius* as *naturae deus humanae* - *the god of human nature*, and yet claims that the *Genius* is mortal for each single life, passing to another person on the death of the first person. The divine/human continuum was indeed flexible. Interestingly also, we note that the *Lares* looked after many types of location. Domestic cult was thus located in homes, gardens, fields and religious shrines, possibly in the form of a smaller version of public rituals. Indeed many portable altars have been found in Pompeii and *large* altars have been found in domestic contexts. (1978: 1576). This adds even more width to the feasible locational contexts of Paul's *eidoleion* in the *Roman* colony of Corinth.

In the Roman period, T.L.Shear<sup>63</sup> suggests that the location of a cup close to the mouth of the deceased in first century C.E. Corinthian graves, may perhaps indicate the ancient belief that the deceased still needed to drink. One grave excavated<sup>64</sup> at Kenchreai is thought to be from the mid first century C.E. and belonged possibly to L. Castricius Regulus, a generous supporter of the city who was *duovir quinquennalis* at Corinth in the reign of Tiberius (14-37 C.E.) and the first Corinthian *agonothetes* at Isthmia in the Roman era. Broneer has pointed out that there is "no essential difference between the worship of the dead and hero worship". (1942: 135 n.25). This fact viewed in the context of the clearly chthonic characteristics and associations of such Corinthian divinities as Demeter, Asklepios, Isis and Sarapis compels us at least to maintain an open mind regarding the role of the dead/heroes in cultic ritual. The possibility that the dead may have played a significant part in the dynamics of cultic temple meals certainly cannot be excluded and thus deserves tentative inclusion as a factor contributing to the backcloth of 1 Cor.8-10. Care of, and concern for, the dead were features of both Greek and Roman society. J. Boardman (1990: 128) indicates the complexity of the issue - "You feast on your *kline* , you die on your *kline* and you are buried on a *kline*... the associations involved

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<sup>63</sup> T.L. Shear "The Excavation of Roman Chamber Tombs at Corinth in 1931". *AJA* Second Series Vol.35 (1931) p.430. Much evidence exists throughout Greece of Classical and Hellenistic reliefs, depicting banquets in a funeral context, dedicated to real heroes or to the heroized mortal dead. Details are provided by John Boardman "Symposium Furniture" (In *Symptica* 1990 p.128 Clarendon Press). S.C. Humphreys (1981: 274) notes that in Greece, the dead were sometimes represented on their monuments reclining on one elbow as at a banquet. C.M. Antonaccio (1994: 399) similarly points out that although the early evidence for hero cult at sanctuaries of Olympian deities is by no means clear, nevertheless "Greek athletic contests are said to originate in funeral games for heroes", a consideration which does merit at least some attention in the context of 1 Cor.8-10 generally and 9:24-27 particularly.

<sup>64</sup> W. Wilson Cummer "A Roman Tomb at Corinthian Kenchreai "in *Hesperia* 40 (1971) pp.205-231.

are complex and the attempt to define them clearly is thwarted by the Greek ability to make one symbol serve more than one message at the same time.”

### 3.5.5 THE IMPERIAL CULT

A consensus now exists across scholarship that the Imperial Cult was established and functioning in Corinth before the time of Paul's visit to the city in the middle of the first century C.E. Significant work on the presence of the Imperial Cult in Roman Corinth has been undertaken by C.K. Williams II "The Refounding of Corinth" 1987. Based on his archaeological work on site, Williams offers a detailed report on the nature and function of Temple E at the west end of the Forum and concludes that "certainly the safest assumption is that Temple E was built to house the Imperial Cult." (1987: 29) Temple E was significantly larger than the other temples at the west end of the Forum and in Williams' view reflects the growth of Imperial Cult throughout the first century C.E. at the expense of the Olympian gods, at least as far as official religion was concerned. As will become apparent later, this view has been contested by scholars such as MacMullen and Price, but Williams does not see a problem here because he notes that Price was speaking about Greek cities in Asia Minor, not Roman colonies in Greece (1987: 36 n.8) Williams notes the discovery of a Corinthian coin struck in Augustus' reign which suggests the existence of a temple at Isthmia or in Corinth with an epistyle inscribed with 'Caesar'. He is convinced that the Imperial Cult had been established in Corinth at least by the rule of Caligula [37-41 C.E.], attested then by the building of Temple E. A Corinthian coin bearing the name of the *duovir* P. Vipsanius Agrippa,<sup>65</sup> has caused scholars to posit a date after 38/39 C.E. for Temple E. but Williams feels this to have been a rebuilding of the Temple with a more generous peristyle. Williams now dates the Temple E under Tiberius [14-37 C.E.] or even earlier. It may have coincided with the establishment of the Imperial Games to add to the already established Caesarea and Isthmian games over which Corinth presided. The first Imperial Games at Isthmia were added to the Isthmian calendar in Tiberius' reign. (Kent 1966: p.28 n.25). For Williams, the reconstruction of Temple E within a magnificent court in the centre of the city "suggests the escalation of the Imperial Cult in Corinth from the time of Tiberius onwards." (1987: 30) In his latest work,<sup>66</sup> Williams points to an early Imperial date, based on evidence of 10 Doric column fragments and the use of heavy cement. He argues in detail, from axis alignment measurements, that Temple E and its compound were not laid out as part of the original city plan of Corinth, but rather that the Temple was an immediately post-Augustan addition and as such, typical

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<sup>65</sup> R. Stillwell, R.L. Scranton & S.E. Freeman *Corinth 1.2 Architecture* (Cambridge, Mass. 1941) p.178.

<sup>66</sup> C.K. Williams II "A Re-Evaluation of Temple E and the West End of the Forum in Corinth" in *The Greek Renaissance in the Roman Empire* Ed. Susan Walker and Averil Cameron. *Bulletin Supplement 55*, 1989. Papers from the 10th British Museum Classical Colloquium, Institute of Classical Studies, University of London.

of the Imperial worship to be expected in a Roman colony. It would appear therefore that a strong Roman consciousness was permeating Corinth during the reigns of Tiberius and Claudius. Indeed it is the consensus now at the American School of Classical Studies at Athens that the Corinth which emerged in and through the Augustan Age and beyond, was in fact profoundly a Roman, rather than a Greek, city, at least during the first fifty years of the first century C.E.

In addition to the Temple E investigations, there are other pieces of evidence which point to the presence of the Imperial Cult in Corinth. In 23 C.E. Livia was honoured as divine Julia Augusta with a poetry contest, even before her death.<sup>67</sup> Thus, as Witherington<sup>68</sup> concurs, the Imperial Cult was probably instituted long before Nero's reign and it is imperial feasting in the period to Nero that we shall later consider in some detail.

A further range of inscriptions though not prolific, does nevertheless exist and points to the imperial cult as being thoroughly established in Corinth before Paul's visit. A number of inscriptions constitute dedications to the Emperor and his house. For example we know that the re-founding of Corinth<sup>69</sup> as *Colonia Laus Julia Corinthiensis* was by order of Julius Caesar. Kent notes an inscription no.50 (Pl.8 Inv.2178) found in the Corinth Theatre in 1926, simply stating " [Sacred] to the deified Julius Caesar." A similar one (no.51-Pl.8 Inv. 1679) declares "[Sacred to] the deified Augustus."<sup>70</sup> Kent No. 53 records the dedication of a monument " [Sacred to the deified] Augustus" found on a marble statue base. Interestingly, Kent also records an inscription (No.55 Pl.8 Inv. 1282) found in a Roman building south of Oakley House in 1933. The text appears to refer to the official deification of Livia by her grandson, the emperor Claudius in 42 C.E. - "(This building(?) is dedicated) to the deified Augusta, the grandmother of [Tiberius] Claudius Augustus Germanicus."

Other inscriptions indicate an apparent concern for the emperor. West (1931 No.15 p.13) notes such an example on a base found in 1907 in the Agora. Though partial and damaged, it states -

To Diana Bringer of the Light of Peace Augusta, a dedication, for the safety of Tiberius Caesar Augustus; Publius Licinius ... freedman of Publius... Philosebastus, had this made at his own expense (Or, 'their own expense').

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<sup>67</sup> J.H. Kent *Corinth Vol.8 Pt.3* No.153. Coin evidence also shows worship of the Imperial Family. See *BMC Corinth* 501 (early 1st century C.E.), 581 (Nero).

<sup>68</sup> Ben Witherington III *Conflict and Community in Corinth: A Socio-Economic Commentary on 1 & 2 Corinthians*. Eerdmans 1995 p.18-19.

<sup>69</sup> See, for example, Strabo 8, 6, 23 and 17, 3, 15; Plutarch *Caesar*57; Paus. 2, 1, 2; Dio Cassius 43, 50, 3-5.

<sup>70</sup> This dedication to Augustus also appears on inscriptions found in the south east area of the Agora in 1933 and in the South Basilica in 1936. (No.52 Pl.8 Inv. 1154a, 1281, 1401, 1713).



The Licinii were a significant family around the late first century C.E. and there seems to have been a concern in Corinth for the safety of the emperor, possibly related to Tiberius' discovery of the conspiracy of Sejanus in 31 C.E. The latter event may be commemorated in an inscription found in 1901 (West, No.110 p.90) and possibly designed to recall the qualities shown by Tiberius -

To Callicratea, daughter of Phileus, priestess in perpetuity of Augustan Providence and Public Safety; the tribesmen of the tribe Agrippia to one who well deserves this.<sup>71</sup>

Epigraphical evidence from Corinth does exist for the presence of Imperial Cult Personnel. The tribune Dinippus may well have helped Corinth during the severe famine in 51 C.E. which would probably have resulted in subsequent honours. Dinippus did indeed preside over the next Isthmian celebration, the first of Nero's reign. Dinippus held the highest magistracy in Corinth, first as *duovir* and then as *duovir quinquennalis*, possibly in the year 52/3 C.E. Moreover, at least five, and possibly six, inscriptions were erected to Dinnipus. (West, Nos.86-92). A typical one is also recorded by Kent (No.158 Pl.14 Inv. 1183) having been found in the South Stoa in a Byzantine well in the colonnade in May 1933:

[Members of the tribe...] (erected this monument) to Tiberius Claudius Dinippus, [son of Publius, of the tribe Fabia], who was *duovir*, [*duovir quinquennalis*], *augur*, priest of Britannic Victory, [military tribune of Legion VI] Hispanensis, chief engineer, curator of the grain supply three times, [*agonothetes*] of the Neronea [Caesarea and of the Isthmian and Caesarean games]. (Kent, 1966, p.74).

The Roman priestly<sup>72</sup> office of *flamen* was represented in inscriptions, one such being dedicated to Gaius Julius Laco who belonged to a prominent Spartan family having many links with Corinth. This inscription<sup>73</sup> was erected under Claudius and Laco held the position of *Flamen Augusti* and *agonothetes* of the Caesarean games on the Isthmus, the latter office probably being exercised in 39 C.E., whilst his *duumvirate* can be assigned to the quinquennalic year 42/3 C.E. Laco's son Gaius Julius Spartiaticus (Inv. No.789 - Braund No. 469 p.155, West No. 68) appears on an inscription found in 1925 on the Lechaem Road. West (1931: 52) dates this find "presumably before the disgrace of Agrippina in 55 C.E., very soon after the death of Claudius." Spartiaticus was *duovir*

<sup>71</sup> Translation by D.C. Braund *Augustus to Nero: A Sourcebook on Roman History 31 B.C. - A.D. 68* Croom Helm, London and Sydney 1985. No.159 p.73. The Latin text appears in V. Ehrenberg and A.H.M. Jones *Documents Illustrating the Reigns of Augustus and Tiberius* Oxford: Clarendon Press 1949 No.130 p.87.

<sup>72</sup> According to Engels D. (*Roman Corinth: An Alternative Model for the Classical City*. Univ. of Chicago Press 1990 p.102) out of the 31 extant references to priests in Roman Corinth, 20 refer to those of the imperial cult.

<sup>73</sup> See Inv. No.929 (north-west shops) recorded by D.C. Braund *Augustus to Nero* 1985 No.468 p.155 and available also in West No. 67.

*quinquennalis* probably in 42/3 C.E. as his father's colleague, and in 47/8. His presidency of the Isthmian Games must have fallen in 47 C.E. or 51 C.E. which means that he must therefore have been functioning at or around the time of Paul's ministry in Corinth. He held the office of "flamen of the divine Julius" as well as the office of *pontifex* or high priest, and the presidency of the Isthmian and Caesarean Augustan Games. This combination of responsibilities does suggest his active participation in cult.<sup>74</sup> Imperial cult must be viewed seriously as a context for 1 Cor.8-10..

The name Babbius Philinus is attested as *pontifex* and *duovir* in Corinth in return for his generous benefactions. (West, No.132 p.107). The lack of mention of his father's name suggests that he was a freedman and the cognomen would indicate his Greek origin. Interestingly the office of *augustalis*,<sup>75</sup> with its responsibility for the performance of the cult of the living emperor, is attested for a freedman, Cispuleius Primus. (West, No.77 Inv.927). This official appears to be linked with Augustalis Tiberianus and West (p.61) suggests that this may indicate a cult of Tiberius during his lifetime, even though Tiberius himself supposedly detested such an idea.

One additional factor which does warrant note is Spawforth's<sup>76</sup> very recent discussion of a Greek 'letter' in the correspondence on the emperor Julian and his argument that this 'letter' should be redated to c.80-120 C.E. It was, he claims, a petition from the city of Argos to the Roman governor of Achaia, in which the Argives pleaded exemption from financial payment towards the cost of celebrations of the imperial cult at the Roman colony of Corinth. He then argues that the various cities of the province had formed a collective cult in the mid-first century C.E. In fact on the accession of the emperor Nero in 54 C.E., a cult of the emperors was instituted at Corinth by these member cities of the Achaean League probably under pressure from the Roman authorities. This was an annual cult whose first high priest was Spartiaticus,<sup>77</sup> and it considerably boosts our thesis of the relevance of imperial cult to an understanding of the context of Paul's work in Corinth, for as Spawforth claims, for that period of the apostle's ministry, "... the celebration of the imperial cult at Corinth became a concern, not just of the colonists themselves, but of the province of Achaia as a whole." New festivals were added to the sacred calendar, many provincial notables were drawn in and these events

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<sup>74</sup> See Robert Schilling "Pontifex" in *The Encyclopedia of Religion* Ed. Mircea Eliade Vol.11 MacMillan 1987 pp.439-440.

<sup>75</sup> This office of *augustales* - which involved spending money on games and cultic rites - is attested in three other inscriptions from Corinth - Kent No.52 Pl.8 Inv.1154a, 1281, 1401, 1713; No.53 Pls. 5,61 Inv. 1750, 2140; No.59 Pl.8 Inv. 1766.

<sup>76</sup> A.J.S. Spawforth "The Achaean Federal Cult Part 1: Pseudo-Julian, Letters 198" in *Tyndale Bulletin*, Vol.46.1 (May 1995) pp.151-168 esp. pp.161-168.

<sup>77</sup> See West *Corinth: Latin Inscriptions* No.68 and Paus. 4, 20.4. Also Kent *The Inscriptions* No.58.

attracted larger and larger crowds. Indeed B. Winter<sup>78</sup> argues that the Argive petition indicates the essential Roman-ness of Corinth's laws and customs and he contends that the establishment of provincial imperial cult in 54 C.E. in Corinth was the trigger which produced strife in the church over attendance at cultic festivals. He sees the root of the problem as allegiance to Emperor Worship, 'the gods on the earth' (1 Cor.8:5) including the Emperor and his family.

### 3.5.6 ATHLETIC CONTESTS

Finally, Paul's athletic imagery in 1 Cor.9:24-27 invites our consideration of the festivals which may have been in Paul's mind. Evidence from Isthmia merits our attention. E.R. Gebhard<sup>79</sup> has argued that the Corinthians very probably were in control of the games by the time of their celebration in 40 B.C.E. Excavations in 1989 suggest that the Palaimonion was first used in the mid first century C.E., at which time the cult installation was built and the theatre re-modelled. Gebhard feels it likely that only the south end of the Classical altar foundation was rebuilt for official sacrifices. The sacred area around temple and altar would have been very small. Indeed Gebhard considers the central part of the sanctuary to have retained "a largely symbolic function" with the main activities occurring in and around the later stadium and theatre. Large crowds, she argues, did not gather around the temple itself. This presumably once more raises the possibility of physical separation between a small number of people who may have sacrificed to Poseidon and a large number of people who consumed food in a separate location. Scope for ambiguity may have existed regarding the nature of such food. Between 50 and 60 C.E. a new cult place was established for sacrifices to the hero Melikertes - Palaimon, the Isthmian Games having been first instituted to celebrate Palaimon, a youth whose body was carried to the Isthmus by a dolphin. The actual ritual is obscure, as Philostratus, *Imagines* 2, 16 indicates, but we do know that again there was physical separation, this time between temple and sacrificial pit.

That there was a close link between athletics and cult has been underlined by Forbes<sup>80</sup> who traced the emergence of athletic guilds from the first century B.C.E., noting that when emperors appointed *xystarch* - presidents of the games - some of these officials also functioned as priest or high priest and offered sacrifices to the gods. According to Geagan, the traditional Greek office of *agoranomos*<sup>81</sup> carried responsibility which included

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<sup>78</sup> B.W. Winter "The Achacan Federal Imperial Cult II: The Corinthian Church" in *Tyndale Bulletin*, Vol.46.1 (May 1995) pp.169-178.

<sup>79</sup> Elizabeth R. Gebhard "The Isthmian Games and the Sanctuary of Poseidon in the early Empire" in *The Corinthia in the Roman Period. J.R. Arch. Suppl. Series No.8* Ed.T.E. Gregory. Ann Arbor MI 1993.

<sup>80</sup> Clarence A. Forbes "Ancient Athletic Guilds" in *Classical Philology* Vol.50 (1955) p.245-8.

<sup>81</sup> Daniel J. Geagan "Notes on the Agonistic Institutions of Roman Corinth" *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* Vol.9 No.1 (1968) p.75-6.

"the sheltering of the huge crowds and the supervision of the multitude of vendors and food merchants." As regards the office of *agoronomia* or *agoranomos*, we have found three epigraphical references from Roman Corinth.<sup>82</sup> Lucius Castricius Regulus was *agonothetes* of the first Isthmia Games of the Roman colony of Corinth in 6 or 2 B.C.E. (Kent, 153) As part of the celebration he "gave a banquet for all the inhabitants of the colony." Other inscriptions noting the office of *agonothetes* for Corinth at the time of Nero are located in Kent 158-163. We have evidence also of the same office for the Isthmia and Caesarea Games under Augustus (Kent 150), under Tiberius (Kent 154, West 81) and under Claudius (West 67). Although the vast majority of first century C.E. Corinthian inscriptions were in Latin, the Isthmian Games was an exception.<sup>83</sup> Geagan (1968: 73) has argued that "the imperial contests were introduced under Tiberius at the latest," but having established the importance of athletic contests and their links with cult, the real challenge is to probe the nature of the cult involved. Geagan (1968: 69) is convinced that the Isthmian Games were "conducted in accordance with Greek customs."

Thus the inscriptions recorded by West indicate that during imperial times, the Isthmia at Corinth were gradually expanded first to include Caesarea (Nos. 67, 81) and then under Claudius, new games in honour of the reigning emperor were added. (Nos. 82, 83 cf. No.68). The Caesarea honoured Augustus, the deified one and his house and West records an inscription dated approximately 35 C.E. (No.81) in which Titus Manlius Juvencus is named as the first to celebrate the Caesarean games before the Isthmian. West (No.82) records an inscription found in 1926, built into the pavement on the east side of the Lechaem Road, which names a famous Corinthian family, the Rutilii. L. Rutilius Plancus was *duovir*, possibly under Tiberius and L. Rutilius Piso was *duovir quinquennalis* at the time of Nero's visit in 67 C.E.

A number of inscriptions have been found which name the *isagogeus*, or son of the *agonothetes*, probably with responsibility specifically for the imperial games, though also, it appears, having associations with literary and musical celebrations like the Corinthian Caesarea. Thus Inscription No.82 (West pp.66-69) includes the term *isagogi* and interestingly it names the games as the *Tiberea Claudiea Caesarea Sebastea*, the change of name from *Caesarea* to *Sebastea* possibly indicating, as West points out, greater honour to Claudius who was fond of the title Augustus. A similar inscription (West No.83) was found in the Julian Basilica east of the Agora in October 1914. The *isagogeus* of this inscription was probably a functionary attached to the imperial games which under Claudius were celebrated in 43, 47 and 51 C.E.

<sup>82</sup> See IG Vol.4, No.203; Kent, *The Inscriptions 1926-1950*, 1966 No.308; SEG Vol.11 No.50.

<sup>83</sup> See, for example, B.D. Meritt Ed. *Corinth: Greek Inscriptions 1896-1927* Harvard Univ. Press 1931 No.14 (list of victors at Isthmian Caesarea 3 C.E.; No.19 (victor list of Caesarea probably in Claudius' reign); No.70 (honorific base to C. Julius Spartiaticus).

Last, but not least in significance, is the pavement inscription discovered between the market and theatre in Corinth. Kent (No. 232 Inv. 2436) renders the following translation of the remaining letter cuttings -

Erastus in return for his aedileship laid (the pavement) at his own expense.

The identification of this 'Erastus' with the one named as *oikonomos* - 'city treasurer' - at Corinth in Romans 16:23 is believed by Kent to be a sound judgment for three reasons. Firstly, the laying of the pavement was near to the mid-first century C.E. in date. Secondly, apart from this inscription, the name 'Erastus' is not found at Corinth and is not a common *cognomen*. Thirdly, Paul's use of *oikonomos* describes "with reasonable accuracy" the function of a Corinthian *aedile* elected as an official of the Roman colony. Kent states that the *cognomen* and *nomen* of Erastus were inscribed on a lost slab to the left of the remaining inscription and he suggests that Erastus may have been similar to Cn. Babbius Philinus i.e. a Corinthian freedman who became wealthy through commercial activity. The Greek term for *aedile* was *agoranomos*, such an official having responsibility for public building, streets and public games. Such was the centrality of athletic games for Corinth that this responsibility was laid on the shoulders of a separate set of officials. Thus, argues Kent, a Corinthian *aedile* may have dealt only with local economic issues and this *may* explain why Paul uses the term *oikonomos* for a Corinthian *aedile*, rather than employing the normal term *agoranomos*. On various occasions such prominent members of Corinthian society would have been expected to attend and participate in cultic activity. In such situations Christians would have been faced with a very real conflict of interests and as such would have encountered difficult dilemmas.

Clearly we have evidence of the presence of Imperial Cult officials and of the active functioning of the various games around the time of Paul's ministry in Corinth. Further evidence of imperial cult ritual involving images, sacrifices and eating will be considered in some detail in Chapters 4 and 5, drawing material from elsewhere in Asia Minor, for competition between cities in the early Empire was by no means rare.<sup>84</sup> We shall thus cautiously draw on material beyond Corinth itself, both in time and space, and seek patterns which might well have been operative in the city and district of Corinth. For the time being, however, we simply note J. Chow's point<sup>85</sup> that Imperial Cult and Games were not only evident and thriving in and around the mid first century C.E. in Corinth, but that "... the imperial cult could account for the problems involved in 1 Corinthians 8-10."

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<sup>84</sup> See for example the evidence available in Dio Chrysostom *Or.* 31, 121; 40, 10-11; 43, 1; 45, 12-13.

<sup>85</sup> John K. Chow *Patronage and Power: A Study of Social Networks in Corinth JSNT Supplement Series No. 75*, Sheffield Academic Press 1992 p.148-9.

### 3.6 CONCLUSION

Previous scholarship on 1 Cor.8-10 has given considerable attention to the cults of Demeter, Asklepios and Isis/Sarapis. The difficulty, as we have seen, is the uncertainty which surrounds their functioning in the Roman period at Corinth. We propose therefore that whilst these cults must not be ignored, serious consideration ought to be given to Roman Imperial Cult as a context for the issues dealt with in the Corinthian Correspondence. Our primary concern will be to build up a picture of the actual nature and perceived significance of images, sacrifices and communal meals. We shall argue for a very broad range of ancient perspectives on these issues and a consequent multitude of individual interpretations. In introducing this research, we commence where we have just finished, namely with the Isthmian Games, where Dio Chrysostom helps us to see the sheer variety<sup>86</sup> of participants and potential perspectives -

That was the time, too, when one could hear crowds of wretched sophists around Poseidon's temple shouting and reviling one another, and their disciples, as they were called, fighting with one another, many writers reading aloud their stupid works, many poets reciting their poems while others applauded them, many jugglers showing their tricks, many fortune-tellers interpreting fortunes, lawyers innumerable perverting judgement and peddlers not a few peddling whatever they happened to have.

We shall now present primary evidence of cultic feasts in the areas of images, sacrifices and communal meals, with the aim of understanding something of the essential dynamics of the problem Paul addressed in 1 Cor.8-10.

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<sup>86</sup> Dio Chrysostom *Discourse 8, 9* Trans. J.W. Cohoon, LCL, 1932. Dio, Roman orator-philosopher, claimed to be describing the scene as it was in the fourth century B.C.E. but his knowledge came from the late first century C.E. when he wrote.

## CHAPTER FOUR

# THE NATURE AND PERCEIVED SIGNIFICANCE OF IMAGES IN THE GRECO-ROMAN WORLD

### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

#### 4.1.1 THE NATURE OF THE PROBLEM

The one issue on which virtually all scholars are agreed is the existence of a conflict situation in the Corinthian Church regarding sacrificial food. Into the whole area of why there should have been a conflict, however, very few scholars appear to have ventured. It is our contention that part of the problem lay in differences of opinion regarding not only the perceived nature and significance of images but also the perceived relationship between those images and the divinity/humanity they represented. If we can detect problems in defining 'idol', then *ipso facto* there are likely to be problems in defining 'idolatry' itself. If a broad range of views existed regarding the 'idol', then we should not be surprised to find a multitude of opinions on the nature of 'idolatry' itself. Thus whilst we do not endorse Bevan's<sup>1</sup> two-fold clinical division, we do agree with his final point concerning range and variety of viewpoint -

Between the belief of the peasant, who took the animation of the idol in its most gross realistic sense, and the belief of the educated man, who regarded the ceremonies of worship as only expressing in a symbolic way that there was some unseen power somewhere, who liked to receive the homage of men, there may have been any number of intermediate shades.

Our suspicion that such a spectrum of viewpoints underlay the conflict in first century C.E. Corinth is based on a number of factors. First of all, whilst detailed biblical exegesis will be undertaken later, it is clear from even a cursory glance at the biblical text of 1 Cor.8-10 that a difference of opinion had arisen over the perceived nature and significance of sacrificial food and that at least part of the conflict had developed over the issue of εἰδωλα, (8:4 and 8:7) because of differing perceptions of those phenomena. Secondly, we have a clear statement in 1 Cor.5:9-13 that Paul had previously written to the Corinthians to instruct them "not to associate with immoral men." (1 Cor.5:9 RSV). It would appear that this instruction had been misunderstood by its readers or that some confusion had arisen. Paul thus explains in 1 Cor.5:9ff that he had been referring not to separation from the immoral (including 'idolaters') of this world, but rather to separation from those within the church who were immoral (including 'idolaters'). Whether the term ἐγγραφα in 5:11 is translated 'I wrote' or 'I write', the text suggests a number of possibilities - that Paul had failed in his previous letter to make a clear distinction between the immoral 'of this world' and the immoral 'in the church', or that Paul had made a clear distinction but some Corinthians had chosen to disregard his instruction, or that some

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<sup>1</sup> Edwyn Bevan *Holy Images*. George Allen and Unwin Ltd., London. 1940 p.29-30.

Corinthians were genuinely confused about just what constituted 'idolatry' and thus about how they were to identify a 'Christian idolater'.

Whichever of these options is adopted, however, the fact remains that the text itself fails to provide a clear description or definition of the term rendered 'idolater'. Similarly, and as will shortly become apparent in our next section, the term εἶδωλον is consistently translated as 'idol' by the RSV, yet the vast majority of these N.T. occurrences fail to pinpoint the specific form, nature or significance of the actual εἶδωλον intended by the writer. We thus have to face the possibility that some Corinthians, because of their different backgrounds, understood such terms as εἶδωλον, εἶδωλόθυτον, εἶδωλολάτρης and εἶδωλολατρία in ways different from those in which Paul himself either understood or communicated them. These conflicting definitions, we argue, were a key part of the problem at Corinth. Thus Christian separation from 'idolatry' was not in practice as simple a matter as it may have seemed. After all, in effect Paul calls the Corinthians to associate with 'pagan idolaters' (1 Cor.5:9-10) *but* to 'shun idolatry'. (1 Cor.10:14). Little wonder then if some at least of the Corinthian believers were genuinely confused by the dilemma they faced regarding involvement in cultic festivals. We contend therefore that the conflict underlying 1 Cor.8-10 arose because of different answers to the three questions "What is an 'idol'?", "What is 'idol-food'?" and ultimately "What constitutes 'idolatrous worship'?"

A fourth factor at the root of the conflicting perspectives on cultic festivals at Corinth, and in particular on images, concerns the polemical, and therefore heavily loaded, nature of such terms as 'idol' and 'idolatry'. This will become apparent through our later studies of the actual terms employed by Paul, but we note now also, albeit very briefly, the work recently offered by Roger Hooker.<sup>2</sup> In his introduction, Hooker points out an example of Western horror at the idols of the Hindu holy city of Benares<sup>3</sup> -

And what a swarm of them [idols] there is! The town is a vast museum of idols - and all of them crude, misshapen, and ugly. They flock through one's dreams at night, a wild mob of nightmares.

Hooker then records the experience of Bishop Leslie Brown as Principal of a united theological college in South India. On a certain day a Hindu convert failed to attend a celebration of the Eucharist, explaining later that "he did not come because he could not tolerate the sight of me [Brown] standing with my hands held together in a praying position, facing the cross which was hanging on the wall."<sup>4</sup> Brown then explained that the cross was a symbol and that is exactly how, according to the converts, Hindus would explain their own images. Hooker (1986: 6) thus concludes that "it is therefore a gross

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<sup>2</sup> Roger Hooker *What is Idolatry?* Published by the Committee for Relations with People of Other Faiths. British Council of Churches 1986.

<sup>3</sup> Mark Twain *Following the Equator*. Stormfield Edition. Vol.II Harper & Brothers N.Y. & London. 1929 p.180.

<sup>4</sup> Bishop Leslie Brown's autobiography *Three Worlds, One Word* Rex Collings, London 1981.



over-simplification to say that Hindus use images while Christians do not." Hooker proceeds to categorize the range of attitudes towards images - 'white washers' who reject images as unable to do justice to God's transcendent holiness and majesty; 'symbolists' who permit images merely as a visual aid or reminder; 'incense burners' who believe that in some way a divine figure is present within the images although some Hindus would distinguish between the one ultimate reality to be *worshipped* and the various manifestations in images to be *venerated*; and 'literalists' who maintain that the deity is totally contained within the image. Hooker then admits that the boundaries between these four attitudes are not always clear. The Apostle Paul would presumably qualify as a 'white-washer', with his strongly Jewish upbringing, whereas many Corinthian believers would fit into the other categories. Hooker (1986: 9) warns that "'white-washers' can easily assume that 'incense-burners' are really 'literalists'." Inaccurate generalizations can easily result, for as Hooker notes (1986: 10) "... all communities have generalized about customs and people which have seemed alien to them." We shall consider this claim in the Corinthian context. In 1 Cor.10:14, Paul seems to have held a real fear that some Corinthians could revert to idol worship. We need to probe, however, into how the Corinthians viewed images and image worship. As soon as we use words such as 'idol' and 'idolatry', we are handling loaded terms and great care needs to be exercised. Hooker believes that 'idolatry' is definable in terms of who says what about whom and includes two elements namely, the belief that the image is truly indwelt by the god, goddess or saint, combined with acts of veneration or worship offered to, or before, the image on the basis of that belief. The crucial thing is that adherents of religion must be allowed to say what they are doing in their own terms because as Hooker concludes, and as became apparent in some of the Torajanese interviews, "... it is very easy - and very misleading - to put other people into categories which are only caricatures of what they really believe." (1986: 51-2).

We have already seen that a wide range of viewpoints exists in the Torajanese Church regarding the nature and function of cultic festivals and the extent of permissible Christian involvement in them. That wide range of individual interpretations produced a highly complex situation which ironically was explicable in terms of an ABC dynamic. We shall adopt this ABC interaction as a working hypothesis to test the ancient Greco-Roman material, firstly on images and then on food -

A = Ambiguities - the existence of a variety of valid viewpoints on the nature, meaning, function and significance of a single entity such as an image.

B = Boundaries - the existence of unclear or 'impossible' boundaries in the ancient world, for example, between the social and the religious, the social and the political, the individual and the communal and between worship and honour.

C = Concepts - the existence of conceptual differences between Paul and some Corinthians, and between *some* Corinthians and *other* Corinthians regarding divinity and

humanity, particularly with reference to the frequent blurring of the distinction between gods, demons, spirits, the dead and the living human.

If such a dynamic - or a similar one - was indeed at work in the ancient world, then we shall be able to see how such a dynamic would produce a wide spectrum of viewpoints on images, each person or group being able thereby to claim validity for their own particular perspective on images and to justify their own degree of participation or non-involvement in cultic festivals. Before seeking to test out this hypothesis in the context of Greco-Roman images, we shall briefly note those scholars who, in general terms, concur with the direction we shall now pursue.

#### 4.1.2 SOME GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

The validity of our ABC hypothesis for the Greco-Roman world is strengthened in several respects by comments made by scholars on a broad and generalized basis. In particular, S.R.F. Price has highlighted what is perhaps a predominantly Western weakness in scholarship and one which may well have adversely affected research on 1 Cor.8-10, namely the tendency to think in clinically and neatly divided categories which did not exist in the ancient world. In this connection he asserts that Imperial Cult in the Greek cities of Asia Minor in the first three centuries C.E. confounds "our expectations about the relationship between religion, politics and power."<sup>5</sup> Moreover claims Price (*Rituals* 1984: 2)

... Christianizing assumptions and categories have proved a major stumbling-block in interpretations of the Imperial Cult ... and of these the most pervasive is our assumption that politics and religion are separate areas ...

His conclusion from this line of argument is one which expresses in a nutshell the challenge which faces us in this research, namely that "we must beware of the imposition of our categories on the ancient world." (Price, *Rituals* 1984: 3).<sup>6</sup> A number of scholars

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<sup>5</sup> S.R.F. Price *Rituals and Power - the Roman Imperial Cult in Asia Minor*. Cambridge University Press 1984 p.1. A similar claim has been made for Greek religion by L.B. Zaidman and P. Schmitt Pantel who argue that "the study of Greek religion requires a preliminary mental readjustment: we must temporarily abandon familiar cultural territory and radically question received intellectual categories. Greek society was fundamentally different from our own, and the concepts that we employ to describe contemporary religious phenomena are necessarily ill adapted to the analysis of what the Greeks regarded as the divine sphere." See *Religion in the Ancient Greek City* C.U.P. 1992 p.3.

<sup>6</sup> Emil Schürer similarly maintains that "... a division between the spheres of religion and political life was utterly alien to classical antiquity: in the affairs of the city the cult of the city's gods had a central place." E. Schürer *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ* (175B.C.E. - A.D. 135) A New English Version, Revised and Edited by Geza Vermes, Fergus Millar and Martin Goodman. Vol. 3 Pt.1 T. & T. Clark 1986 p.131. Writing in a similar vein, and in the context of Roman Corinth, D. Engels has argued that "since the Enlightenment, the West, and especially the United States, has maintained a political and intellectual separation between the secular and religious spheres. While this separation has benefitted both, the ancient world made no such separation, and religion was a powerful influence on social, economic, and political institutions and values." D. Engels *Roman Corinth: An Alternative Model for the Classical City*. Univ. of Chicago Press, 1990 p.92.

have attempted to show that the Imperial Cult was essentially a political, rather than religious phenomenon.<sup>7</sup> Price however warns of the danger of making false distinctions (*Rituals* 1984: 18-19)

To follow the conventional distinction between religion and politics privileges the view of an observer over that of the Greeks and makes it impossible to understand the dynamics of the Imperial Cult ... the pre-occupation with a distinction between religion and politics in the study of the Imperial Cult is a perpetuation of the perspective engendered by the struggles and eventual triumph of the Christian Church.

Following on from this therefore is the need for us to realize afresh that there are serious dangers in taking an either/or interpretation of categories. The importance of our willingness to adopt a both/and approach is confirmed by F.K. Yegül<sup>8</sup> writing in the context of the perceived relationship between 'real god' and 'deified emperor' in the Imperial Cult - "No small part of the modern controversy may be attributed to a certain reluctance of the Western mind to accept the possibility of a subtle and comfortable co-existence of a ritualistic and emotional form of hero worship with an independent concept of true religion and gods, or of homage and worship." In a similar vein, Skorupski has pointed out that for many people brought up in modern Western society, one of the most bewildering and mysterious "features of primitive modes of thought - at least as these have been presented to them - is their apparently bizarre, often downright paradoxical content."<sup>9</sup> He cites the example that for many, 'rain is Spirit'. The fact that the Greeks themselves felt no need to describe or explain the Imperial Cult in the Greek world is noted by Price (*Rituals*, 1984: 3). Similarly the bulk of Roman evidence for local cults of the Emperor is non-literary. Although, as Price maintains, many Greeks probably would not have had a definite articulate response to questions about their view of the Imperial Cult, nevertheless this is not to say that the cult had no meaning for individuals. We do well to bear in mind the assertion of the anthropologist D. Sperber<sup>10</sup> that "... a complex symbolic system can work very well without being accompanied by any exegetic

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<sup>7</sup> D. Fishwick ("The Development of provincial ruler worship in the western Roman Empire" in *ANRW* 2.16.2 1978 p.1253) argued that "the real significance of the worship of the Roman emperor, particularly in its provincial application, lies not in the realm of religion at all but in a far different field: that of practical government, wherein lay the historic destiny of the Roman people." Similarly G.W. Bowersock (*Augustus and the Greek World* Oxford-Clarendon Press 1965 p.112) claims that study of Imperial Cult in the Greek world shows that the cult reveals "little about the religious life of the Hellenic peoples but much about their ways of diplomacy."

<sup>8</sup> Fikret K. Yegül "A Study in Architectural Iconography: 'Kaisersaal' and the Imperial Cult" *The Art Bulletin* Vol.64 (1982) p.15 n.39.

<sup>9</sup> John Skorupski "The Meaning of Another Culture's Beliefs" in *Action and Interpretation: Studies in the Philosophy of the Social Sciences* Ed. C. Hookway and P. Pettit. Cambridge Univ. Press. 1978 p.98.

<sup>10</sup> Dan Sperber *Rethinking Symbolism*. Translated from French by Alice L. Morton. Cambridge Univ. Press 1975 p.18.

commentary." Whilst we recognize that Guthrie<sup>11</sup> is correct in his view that "it is not easy to get at the minds of ordinary people who lived over two thousand years ago", nevertheless we consider the task worthwhile, indeed crucial, in any attempt to investigate the dynamics which we believe lay behind 1 Cor.8-10. Price indeed suggests that all viewpoints on the Imperial Cult were significant, both elite and others, and maintains, as we also shall continue to argue, "Ritual can be the basis for various evocations for different groups, which can all be 'valid'. Within the Greek city the ceremonies were appreciated by all." (*Rituals*. 1984: 116).

As we seek to probe these viewpoints, initially with regard to images and then food, we shall bear in mind a number of other factors which scholarship has observed to be operative and relevant. One area of concern is that of attempts to measure personal attitudes toward religion. According to A.D. Nock, and with regard to mid first century C.E. times, the Imperial Cult was "an outward sign of loyalty which involved little sentiment."<sup>12</sup> Price reacts strongly against such a claim, asserting that "the problem with emotion as the criterion of the significance of rituals is not just that in practice we do not have the relevant evidence but that it is covertly Christianizing." (*Rituals*, 1984: 10). The crux of Greco-Roman religion in any case was not what adherents thought, felt or believed but what they actually *did*. Whilst Engels (1990: 110-11) recognizes that the Corinthian believers retained many of their former religious notions and social values, he underlines the problem of individualism and its associated variation in cultic practice for "in paganism, there was no orthodox or authoritative dogma for the worship of any god." The scope for variation of ritual practice and multiple interpretation was thus considerable and would have caused differences of perspective not only within the Corinthian Church but also between the believers and Paul.

The inextricable unity of religion and culture is a theme which will recur repeatedly in our research findings. The sacred and the secular were anything but watertight compartments in the ancient world. Augustus could take holidays in towns around Rome and hold court in the colonnades of the Temple of Hercules. (Suet. *Aug* . 72-5). In front of the *prytaneion* - Town Hall - of the Eleans was an altar of Artemis Huntress and inside the same building was an altar of Pan. The sacred and the secular were inseparable.

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<sup>11</sup> W.K.C. Guthrie *The Greeks and Their Gods*. Methuen & Co. Ltd. London 1950 p.255. It is likewise judicious to bear in mind the claim of R.M. Ogilvie that "our knowledge of Roman religion is derived from a handful of articulate and highly educated Romans who are representative of only a very small class, a class, moreover, which was brought up to think of everything intellectual in Greek rather than Roman terms." See *The Romans and Their Gods: In the Age of Augustus*. Chatto & Windus, London. 1969 p.1. See also MacMullen, *Paganism* 1981: 9.

<sup>12</sup> A.D. Nock *Conversion: The Old and the New in Religion from Alexander the Great to Augustine of Hippo*. Oxford Univ. Press 1933 p.229. Whilst we acknowledge Nock's weakness in making such a sweeping statement, nevertheless we recognize the validity of his attempt to resist negative portrayals of pagans. He warns that it is "a grave error to think of the ordinary man in the Roman Empire as a depraved and cruel fiend, dividing his hours between the brothel and intoxication, torturing a slave from time to time when he felt bored, and indifferent to the suffering and poverty of others." (ibid. p.218).

(Paus. 5.15.8). MacMullen,<sup>13</sup> for example, describes the wide range of musical instruments, dance, song, theatrical shows, lectures, prose hymns and philosophizing which was employed in the service of the gods of various cults. He then concludes -

... in sum, the whole of culture, so it would seem. The same conclusion can be expressed negatively. From the arts of those centuries, [2nd and 3rd C.E. of the Roman Empire] remove everything that was not largely devoted to religion. The heart of culture then is gone.

Yet another boundary problem was that which concerned the identity of supernatural beings, and the whole issue of magic, superstition and religion, raised for example by the discovery of curse tablets at Demeter and Kore from the Roman period. J. Gager<sup>14</sup> for example concludes that "... although ancient theoreticians sometimes tried to sort these beings [the supernatural beings of ancient Mediterranean culture] into clear and distinct categories, most people were less certain about where to draw the lines between gods, *daimones*, planets, stars, angels, cherubim and the like... ." Moreover those who would try to label curse tablets as magic, on the grounds that chthonic deities were involved, will be thwarted in this because the named beings appear also in what we call 'ancient religion', where in any case, almost every god or spirit shows some connection with death and the underworld.

The final challenge we face in conducting this piece of research is that of the ancient material itself. It is both narrow in the sense that ancient literature, according to Morton Smith, is "almost entirely upper-class and rationalistic"<sup>15</sup>, yet at the same time very broad both in time and space, for as Smith elsewhere observes "... in a large and complex society all sorts of attitudes towards all sorts of gods are always represented by some individuals... ."<sup>16</sup> It was the existence of ambiguities, blurred or non-existent boundary lines and conceptual differences which opened the way for a broad range of valid interpretations on cultic festivals and Christian involvement in them. The existence of multiple viewpoints is crucial to our arguments concerning the cultic festivals which lay behind 1 Cor. 8-10. The crux of our approach has been well captured in MacMullen's claim (1981: 135) that

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<sup>13</sup> Ramsey MacMullen *Paganism in the Roman Empire* Yale Univ. Press 1981 p.24.

<sup>14</sup> John G. Gager Ed. *Curse Tablets and Binding Spells from the Ancient World*. Contributors are C.F. Cooper, D. Frankfurter, D. Krueger and R. Lim. Oxford Univ. Press 1992 p.12.

<sup>15</sup> Morton Smith "Prolegomena to a discussion of Aretologies, Divine Men, the Gospels and Jesus" *JBL* Vol.90 (1971) p.179.

<sup>16</sup> Morton Smith "The Image of God: Notes on the Hellenization of Judaism, with Especial Reference to Goodenough's Work on Jewish Symbols". *Bulletin of John Rylands Library* No. 40 (1957-8) p.512.

... distinction must be made between two elements in religion; the perceptible, meaning the activities and all that those activities imply in consequence of a person's being an open participant in some belief; and the debatable, as I have called it, meaning those feelings and thoughts that accompany a person's acknowledgement of a god; and a person may grow up into certain religious activities without ever believing, or come to believe but never participate, so the priority of the one or the other element is not fixed, nor even their occurrence as a pair.

We believe the task of investigating these viewpoints to be crucial. The Corinthian viewpoints behind 1 Cor.8-10 must be heard, for D. Engels (1990: 110) is surely right when he argues that

Paul's problems with the Corinthians are usually portrayed as a conflict of superior understanding and legitimate authority against ignorance and recalcitrance. This is indeed the impression obtained from reading Paul's letters. However, the Corinthian perspective of Paul is fundamental for the understanding of these problems, and this perspective is not always given in discussions of Paul's mission to the city.

## 4.2 THE AMBIGUITY OF IMAGE TERMINOLOGY

### 4.2.1 IMAGE TERMS IN GREEK RELIGION

We shall begin with the basic categories of images proposed by W.H.S. Jones<sup>17</sup> which he describes as "a few synonyms." Jones attempts a five-fold division of images which includes ξόανον, an ancient wooden image of a god; ἄγαλμα, an image or statue generally of a god; ἀνδριάνς, a non-religious statue of a man; εἰκόν, a portrait or likeness often identical in meaning with ἀνδριάνς; and ἔδος which is used only once in Pausanias of a statue of Aphrodite. Jones's system of classification, whilst helpful, is by no means as simple or straightforward as it might appear.

The complexity of image terminology has been observed by R.L. Gordon<sup>18</sup> in the context of Greek uses of metaphors for statues. He cites three terms, beginning with *zoon* which first appeared in extant Greek literature in the 5th Century B.C.E., meaning primarily 'living thing'. According to Gordon, however, 5th Century B.C.E. Herodotus also used this term to mean 'image' or 'representation', whether carved or painted. Gordon agrees that *andrias* was particularly used for statues of the human male "whose semantic motivation is equally clear: the thing is a man but not a man." (1979: 10). He contends that the term *eikon* was already doubtful in Homer between the sense 'be like' and that of 'seem'. Indeed, he continues to argue that by the 4th Century B.C.E., it could be used casually to mean 'something imaginary', 'something which exists only in the mind'.

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<sup>17</sup> W.H.S. Jones *Pausanias: Description of Greece* Vol.1 LCL. 1969 Introduction p.xxvi. Jones makes the significant comment that *agalma* "might be translated 'idol' were it not for the superstitious associations of this word."

<sup>18</sup> R.L. Gordon "The Real and the Imaginary: Production and Religion in the Graeco-Roman World" in *Art History* Vol. 2 No.1 (March 1979) p.9-10.

The crucial point made by Gordon is that all of these terms become 'catachrestic'. In other words the terms were improperly used and applied to things which they did not properly denote. Thus, says Gordon (1979: 10) "... their early ambiguity became as imperceptible as the metaphor of the eye of a needle for us. But the ambiguity of human representation continued to be signalled in many other ways." He believes that ambiguity was not limited to early statues. (p.29 n.19).

Broadly speaking, scholars have adopted a basic distinction between ἄγαλμα and εἰκών. Thus K. Scott<sup>19</sup> has proposed that "usually the ἄγαλμα or *simulacrum* appears to be a cult statue in a temple." Indeed Lewis and Stroud<sup>20</sup> have examined literary and epigraphic testimonia on the Athenian Agora and found that ἄγαλμα is limited to divine figures, whilst the 55 known honorary statues of humans are described by such terms as εἰκόνες or ἀνδριάντες. They claim that the same distinction is found in Attic decrees of all periods. In spite of this, however, the distinction did break down, as is admitted by A.D. Nock when he notes "a loose use of εἰκόνες for an ἄγαλμα and an εἰκών" and records an example of "an εἰκών in Ptolemaic Egypt receiving cultus."<sup>21</sup> Scott likewise concedes that "... a *simulacrum* need not always be the cult image in the deity's temple, for we learn that the senate once voted that there be erected in the senate house an *aureum Minervae simulacrum* and an *imago* of Nero [Tac. *Ann.* 14. 12.1]". (1931: 106). Furthermore, ἄγάλματα of Alexander and Ptolemy appeared in the procession held by Ptolemy Philadelphus (3rd century B.C.E.), unless these were cult images which normally were located inside temples. Any attempt to identify simple or watertight compartments for ἄγαλμα on the one hand and εἰκών on the other, is further frustrated by Scott's observation that "in Roman times there is considerable evidence<sup>22</sup> of worship paid to the εἰκών or *imago*, especially when it was at the standards or among the household gods." Thus reception of cult cannot be determined on the basis of image terminology alone. Any attempt to establish a one-to-one relationship between category and cult will meet the problems of inconsistency and exceptions to the 'rule'.

#### 4.2.2 IMAGE TERMS IN THE IMPERIAL CULT

S.F.R. Price does attempt to distinguish between *andrias* and *eikon* which were honorific images located in the square or in other public places, and *agalma* which was

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<sup>19</sup> K. Scott "The Significance of Statues in Precious Metals in Emperor Worship" in *Transactions & Proceedings of the American Philological Association*. Vol.62 (1930) p.105. Scott correctly cites evidence for this distinction in Dio's *Roman History* 59.4.4, 11.2-3 and 28.1-8.

<sup>20</sup> D.M. Lewis and R.S. Stroud "Athens honours King Euagoras of Salamis" *Hesperia* Vol.48 (1979) p.193.

<sup>21</sup> A.D. Nock "Σύνναος Θεός" in *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*. Vol. 41 (1930) 3.

<sup>22</sup> See for example the situations recorded in Suetonius *Tib* 48.2 and 65; Dio's *Roman History* 59. 27. 3; Suet *Caligula* 14. 3; Suet *Vitellius* 2. 5; and Ovid, *Ex Ponto*. 2.8.

basically an image with a sacred context. Nevertheless he admits to problems with this classification. He believes for example that *xoanon* - generally believed to refer to archaic wooden statues only - was in fact a term which actually was used right through to the Imperial period with reference to statues of various sizes, ages and materials, although hardly ever in relation to imperial statues. Thus Price concedes, regarding Greek terminology for images "... it can seem quite chaotic, particularly if we insist on discovering terms that refer uniquely to particular types of objects." (*Rituals* 1984: 176).

In spite of the complexity and inconsistency of terminology, Price still employs a basic three-fold division - *andriantes*, *eikones* and *agalмата* - in his study of the Imperial Cult in Asia Minor. Nevertheless his research quickly unearths a minefield of exceptions and inconsistencies which forces him to conclude that "the terminology does not have a one-to-one relationship with particular types of statues" and that "the relationship between these terms is complex." (*Rituals* 1984: 176-7). For example *andriantes* could refer to life-size statues of an Emperor or it could merge with the category of *eikones*.<sup>23</sup> The latter was a 'likeness' but the actual form it took varied in different contexts, including for example a statue, a bust, a tondo (circular easel painting) or a painting. Similar complexity surrounds the nature of *agalмата* of the imperial cult which were placed in temples and shrines. Although *agalмата* are generally believed to have had religious contexts, and thus to have been used only rarely of imperial statues, nevertheless, the situation was nothing like as clear cut as that. Price concludes (*Rituals* 1984: 177)

But imperial images were classified not only by the secular terms but also as *agalмата*, which was the normal term for the main statue of the deity in a temple. It was standard to refer to the imperial statue in a temple (*naos*) as an *agalma*.<sup>24</sup>

Having established the great difficulty of delineating clear categories of images, our next task is to seek to identify which images actually received cult. Here Price observes that to render *agalma* as 'cult statue' misleadingly suggests that all and only *agalмата* ever received cult. (*Rituals* 1984: 178). The reality was that both *eikones* and *agalмата* could receive cult.<sup>25</sup> Further complication is added when we realize that not all *agalмата* received cult. It is known that images of private citizens "who did not receive public cult in the imperial period, were sometimes placed in sacred locations, either in their lifetimes or after their deaths, and were called *agalмата*." (Price *Rituals* 1984: 178).<sup>26</sup> To

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<sup>23</sup> See for example the situation recorded at Ilion in *IGR* IV 201 line 5 and at Prymnessus in *IGR* IV 673, Lines 9-10.

<sup>24</sup> For example, *IGR* IV.144 refers to imperial statues - *agalмата* - in the temple of Athena. *IGR* III 933 mentions a case at Lapethus in Tiberius' period in line 8 and 11.

<sup>25</sup> For example, it seems that the *agalma* of Attalus was placed in a temple, whilst the *eikon* of Attalus stood in the square - *OGIS* 332 lines 8-11. (Attalus III of Pergamum c.170-133 B.C.E.)

<sup>26</sup> An example from Iasos can be seen in L. Robert *Opera Minora Selecta* Vol. III Adolf M. Hakkert Ed. Amsterdam 1969 pp. 1478-92 line 8 and also from Ancyra in *IGR*, III, 192, line 20.



compound the complexity even further, imperial *eikones* have also been found in temples as the main images, according to Price, whilst an *eikon* of the traditional deity Artemis has been noted in the porch of a temple.<sup>27</sup> Thus images, as recipients of cult, cannot be determined on the basis of terminology alone.

Even in this preliminary study of terminology, therefore, the emerging conclusion is that image classification into strict categories is fraught with exceptions, inconsistencies and sheer complexity. Some images received cult, some did not. Part of the complexity stems also from the ways people understood particular terms and of course a range of understandings inevitably would have produced a range of perspectives and arguments from people, not least regarding whether a particular image was held to be cultic or not. Guthrie has seen this issue when he writes "Language and thought are so inseparable that it is extremely difficult, thinking in English, to understand exactly what a word like *nous* meant to a Greek, and how he was influenced by the history of its ordinary usage." (1950: 373 n.2). It is for this sort of reason that we must now attempt to consider the sort of perspectives, thoughts and attitudes which might have been triggered among the Corinthians by Paul's choice and use of the term *eidolon* in mid-first century C.E. Corinth.

### 4.3 UNDERSTANDINGS OF THE TERM *EIDOLON*

#### 4.3.1 PRE-CHRISTIAN USAGE OF *EIDOLON* IN THE GRECO-ROMAN WORLD

The term *eidolon* is based on *eidos* meaning 'figure', 'form', 'picture' or 'copy'. *Eidos* itself is derived ultimately from the root *ide* meaning 'to see'. We have just seen (Section 4.2) that in the Greco-Roman world, the normal term for cultic images, as employed by the Greeks, was *agalma*, whilst *andrias* or *eikon* functioned as terms for statues of men. It is imperative, therefore, that serious consideration be given to the ways in which pre-Christian Greeks themselves might have understood and used the term *eidolon* which appears in 1 Cor.8. The number of occurrences of *eidolon* across the spectrum of Greek literature, according to a TLG Computer Search, is in excess of two and a half thousand. Selected and brief examples will thus be given to indicate the diversity of contexts involving the term *eidolon* and hence the potential range of understandings and perspectives generated by it.

In the Homeric, Archaic and Classical periods of Greek literature, the term *eidolon* was used consistently to mean a 'phantom' or the ghost of a dead person. It *could* refer to an image, but one of a human, not divine, person. The stress was always on the image, copy or representation of a human being - a reflection, not the reality. Plato (c.429-347 B.C.E.) for example, used *eidolon* in three senses - a fancy or phantom of the mind (*Phaedo* 66C), the dead body of a human (*Laws* 959 B) and 'images of speech' that have

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<sup>27</sup> As, for example, at Saghir, Pisidia recorded in *JGR* III, 297.

the appearance of truth but in fact are deceptive (*Sophist* 265B). Interestingly Rev. Terry Griffiths touches upon the ambiguity and potential complexity, of the term *eidolon* when he observes, with regard to Plato's use of *eidolon*-

Because *eidola* are at least one step removed from reality by virtue of their only being copies of the true, and because they belong to the realm of the transient and the ambiguous, they must necessarily be tainted with falsehood and deception.<sup>28</sup>

The 2nd century B.C.E. Greek historian Polybius describes an *eidolon* which took the form of a machine created by Nabis, the evil tyrant of the Lakedaemonians. (*Histories* Bk 13. 7. 2). This *eidolon* looked like a richly dressed woman, not unlike Nabis' own wife, and it was this machine, in the form of a physical representation of his wife, that Nabis used to inflict torture on his uncooperative citizens. It is in Polybius Bk. 30. 25. 13-15 that we encounter one of those very rare occasions on which a 'pagan' Greek used the word *eidolon* to mean an image of a god.<sup>29</sup> Antiochus IV (2nd century B.C.E.) held huge games at Daphne, preceded by a large procession in which Polybius describes vast numbers of ἀγαλμάτων being carried along. Polybius then uses εἰδῶλα to describe representations of gods, spirits and heroes and he records also the presence of εἰδῶλα of the myths relating to them - Night and Day, Earth and Heaven, Dawn and Midday. Polybius writes of the representations as being "mentioned or worshipped by men"<sup>30</sup> and it is this distinction which raises the possibility that some gods may have been represented but not actually worshipped as divine. It may be that Polybius used the term *eidolon* as a literary alternative for the purpose of stylistic variation, but what it certainly indicates is of potentially great significance for our analysis of 1 Cor.8-10, namely that Polybius' use of *eidola* shows that the latter term could be used of divine images in Greco-Roman literature "without necessarily implying that they are in receipt of cultus."<sup>31</sup> Diodorus Siculus (Bk. 1.22.6 - first century B.C.E.) did use the term εἰδῶλα to describe the models of the genitalia of Osiris set up by Isis in temples to be honoured with rites and sacrifices. The same document also contains a reference to Medea making an εἰδῶλον of Artemis to bring pressure to bear on a superstitious people. (Bk. 4.51). These

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<sup>28</sup> Unpublished draft paper *The Term EIDOLON in its relation to Cultic Images*. Material for Ch.2 of Ph.D. dissertation in preparation in 1994 which Rev. Griffiths kindly allowed me to see before submission of his thesis - *Little Children, Keep yourselves from Idols (1 Jn. 5:21): The Form and Function of the Ending of the First Epistle of John*, 1995 (Univ. of London).

<sup>29</sup> Dionysius of Halicarnassus uses εἰδῶλα to refer to Trojan gods, yet he also uses εἰκόνες (Antiq. Rom. 1.68.2). Diodorus Siculus mentions 12 gods (εἰδῶλα) in a procession, i.e. statues, but the 13th was of Philip himself - θεοπρεπέες εἰδῶλον (16.92.5).

<sup>30</sup> Polybius *The Histories* Bk. 30, 25, 13. Translation by W.R. Paton L.C.L. 1927 p.144.

<sup>31</sup> Rev. Terry Griffiths. Unpublished paper entitled *The Background and Meaning of EIDOLON*. See note 28. This paper is Chapter Two of his thesis which was submitted at King's College, Univ. of London, in June 1995.

occurrences represent rare examples of *eidolon* used of cult-receiving images in Greek writers.

Philo Judaeus of Alexandria (30 B.C.E. - 45 C.E. approx.) criticizes an audience which was not concentrating on a philosopher's lecture and as such might as well be *eidola* and *andriantes*.<sup>32</sup> Further study of Philo showed his use of *eidolon* to indicate unreal phantoms or spectres,<sup>33</sup> and symbolic worship of the vain things of life.<sup>34</sup> Philo thus stresses unreality and a lack of real substance.<sup>35</sup> The Jewish priest Josephus, writing in the second half of the first century C.E. described Jews trapped in Jerusalem as *eidola*, indicating their starved bodies during their war against the Romans.<sup>36</sup> These Jews were shadows of their former selves. Plutarch, in the later part of the first century C.E., refers to the sleep of superstitious people as being plagued by fearful images and apparitions,<sup>37</sup> and to Apis who is the *eidolon* of the soul of Osiris.<sup>38</sup> This refers to a living animal worshipped by Egyptians. Greeks, fighting a sea-battle, imagine they see *eidola* - the apparitions and shapes of armed men coming to protect the Hellenic galley-ships.<sup>39</sup>

Thus, the term *eidolon* as used in Greek literature fundamentally and consistently was used in a positive, neutral or merely factual manner. It occurred frequently in the context of death and the world of the dead and this fact at least merits some consideration in the first century C.E. Corinthian context. The term also overwhelmingly reflects the human, earthly dimension rather than the divine world. Only very rarely was *eidolon* used in pre-Christian Greek literature to indicate a representation of the divine. Above all, the term conveyed unreality. It indicated something which was an image or representation of a real thing but not the real thing itself. It was employed in a wide variety of contexts, though very rarely of divine images and even then, the Greek mind would not automatically link the term *eidolon* with the actual receipt of cultus.

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<sup>32</sup> Philo *De Congressu Quaerendae Eruditionis Gratia* (On Mating with the Preliminary Studies) Section XIII, 65.

<sup>33</sup> *De Somniis* II, XIX, 133-5.

<sup>34</sup> *De Spec. Leg.* I. 23 in which Philo uses *agalma* to refer to a divine image in a sanctuary.

<sup>35</sup> This can be seen also in Philo *Allegorical Interpretation* Bk. II, 46, (on Genesis 2:23), *On the Confusion of Tongues* 60-74 (on Genesis 11: 1-9) and *Rewards and Punishments* 15-20 (on Genesis 5:24 LXX).

<sup>36</sup> Josephus *The Jewish War* Bk. V, 513.

<sup>37</sup> Plutarch, *Moralia, Superstition*, II, 165F.

<sup>38</sup> Plutarch, *Moralia, On Isis and Osiris*, 359B.

<sup>39</sup> Plutarch, *Themistocles* XV, I, 119E.

### 4.3.2 SEPTUAGINT USES OF *eidolon*

The Greek O.T. contains a total of 96 occurrences of the word *eidolon* in its various forms and our analysis extended to 22 texts and short passages which produced a number of usages. Space permits here the presentation of only a small sample.

Some texts refer to food, drink, offerings and sacrifices made to *eidola* and each one examined portrays involvement with *eidola* as a negative activity which inevitably brings forth God's anger. Isaiah 57:5 speaks of οἱ παρακαλοῦντες ἐπὶ τὰ εἴδωλα<sup>40</sup> and verse 6 expresses God's anger over this as the people offer food and drink. In 2 Chron.33:22 Amon is condemned as evil because he sacrificed πᾶσιν τοῖς εἰδώλοις which his father Manasses had made. The consequences are then outlined - pride and lack of humility (v.23), transgressions (v.23) and the multiplication of violence. (vv.24-5).

The Septuagint holds the position that whilst involvement with *eidola* brings God's condemnation,<sup>41</sup> yet the reverse also holds true, namely that removal of *eidola* secures God's blessing. This can be seen for example in the period of peace for Judah when Asa removed τὰ θυσιαστήρια καὶ τὰ εἴδωλα (2 Ch.14:3). Similarly the presence of the Lord with Jehoshaphat is explained in 2 Chron. 17:3 - οὐκ ἐξεζήτησεν τὰ εἴδωλα - 'he did not seek *eidola*'. The result was prosperity for his kingdom (v.5).

A number of Septuagint texts portray *eidola* in the context of supernatural beings. For example, on two occasions in Daniel 3: 12, 18, Sedrach, Misach and Abednego are reported as refusing to serve τῷ εἰδώλῳ or to worship τῇ εἰκόνι σου τῇ χρυσοῦ. The relationship between these two terms is not however explained. Lev. 19:4 similarly presents a two-fold command not to follow εἰδώλοις and not to make θεοὺς χωνευτούς. ('molten gods'). 1 Chron. 16:26 actually states that all the gods - οἱ θεοὶ - of the nations are εἴδωλα whereas 'our god made the heavens'. When Jacob (Gen.31:19) fled from Laban, Rachel stole the household gods - τὰ εἴδωλα τοῦ πατρὸς αὐτῆς but Laban, when challenging Jacob about this, uses the phrase τοὺς θεοὺς μου (v.30). Later however the narrative reverts to τὰ εἴδωλα in v.34-35. Finally in Deut. 32: 21 (Song of Moses), Moses claims that Israel has provoked God to jealousy with that which is not God (ἐπ' οὐ θεῶν); they have exasperated him with their 'idols'. (ἐν τοῖς εἰδώλοις αὐτῶν). The Septuagint consistently employs the term *eidolon* to translate a wide variety of Hebrew words. Thus, for example Genesis 31:19,34,35 - *teraphim* (household idols/gods); Leviticus 19:4 - *elilim* (worthless) idols/gods; Deut.32:21 - *h<sup>a</sup> vālim* (worthless) idols; 1 Chron. 16:26 - *elilim* (worthless) idols/gods;

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<sup>40</sup> All Septuagint references are from the Greek text of the Septuagint. Ed. Alfred Rahlfs. Stuttgart 1935 Vols. I and II.

<sup>41</sup> The O.T. examples of God's condemnation of Israel in 1 Cor.10: 1-13 might be used to argue that the Corinthians surely realized that when Paul used *eidolon*, it was being done with a critical, polemical edge. We shall seek to show in Ch.4, however, that the presence of *eidola* in Corinth did not necessarily represent divinity, nor did it prove that these *eidola* were actually being worshipped. Those Christians arguing in support of participation in cultic meals *did* have a valid case.

2 Chron. 14:2 - *asherim* (Asherah); 2 Ch.17:3 - *b'alim* (Baals); 2 Ch.33:22 - *p'silim* (graven) image; Daniel 3:12,18 - *tselem dahava* (golden) image. The way in which the Septuagint uses a single term *eidolon* to apply uniformly and without distinction to a variety of different situations and contexts is reflected by the comment of Fredouille<sup>42</sup> which is relevant here -

Mit der Verwendung von εἰδωλον haben die LXX also nicht versucht, das Hebräische wörtlich wieder zugeben, sondern inhaltlich zu übertragen.

(My translation - "With the use of εἰδωλον, therefore, the LXX has not attempted to render and repeat the Hebrew literally, but to give the content)

Thus in the Septuagint, *eidola* consistently bring God's condemnation of those who make or worship them. Blessing can be expected only when *eidola* have been removed. *Eidola* are portrayed polemically and always in an evil and negative light. *Eidola* are thus presented as false or other gods which are forbidden. The identification of deity with idol raises the question of whether Jews or Christians are actually thereby misunderstanding 'pagan' religion regarding the actual nature and perceived significance of images.

#### 4.3.3 N.T. USES OF *eidolon*

In each of its 11 occurrences in the New Testament, the word *eidolon* has been rendered 'idol' by the RSV translators. In two cases, *eidolon* is used to refer to a physical image (Acts 7:41 and Rev. 9:20) but in every other occurrence, no specific description is given, either of its nature or function. A number of themes do, however, consistently recur.

Several N.T. uses of *eidolon* emphasize the idea of lifelessness, untruth and inability to communicate. In 1 Cor.12:2 Paul recalls the 'pagan' past of the Corinthians when they were 'led astray to dumb idols'. (RSV) In a series of sharp contrasts between believers and 'pagans', Paul asks the question "What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God..." (2 Cor.6:16). The *eidolon*, which is dead, is thus set in opposition to the *living* God. Likewise in 1 Thess. 1:9 the believers are said to have turned to God "from *eidola* to serve a living and true God." (RSV) A contrast between the truth of God and falsity is stated in 1 John 5:20 and is immediately followed by the short sharp command of verse 21 "Little children, keep yourselves from idols." (RSV) Indeed 1 Jn. 5:16-19 makes repeated reference to sin which believers must not exhibit. Finally in Rev. 9:20, the *eidola* are described as being unable to "see or hear or walk".

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<sup>42</sup> J.-C. Fredouille "Götzendienst" in *Reallexicon für Antike und Christentum: Sachwörterbuch zur Auseinandersetzung des Christentums mit der antiken Welt*. Ed. T.K. Klauser et al. Vol. 11 Stuttgart. Anton Hiersemann 1981 p.849.

Allegiance to an *eidolon* is explicitly or implicitly considered to be sinful and is presented as such in some texts. For example, Acts 15:20 speaks of "the pollutions of idols" and follows this immediately by a call to abstain also from "unchastity". According to Stephen in Acts 7:42f. God was highly displeased over the calf image incident in the wilderness. Speaking of the need for inward circumcision of the heart, Paul in Rom. 2:22 asks two questions - "You who say that one must not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples?" (RSV) *Eidolon* is thus used negatively as involving impurity and pollution. All the N.T. uses of *eidolon* are presented as something to be avoided by believers at all costs.

In all of this, only Rev. 9:20 refers to actual *worship* of *eidola*. The term *eidolon* is used negatively and polemically by N.T. writers to oppose 'paganism', but although all of these texts condemn believers' association or involvement with *eidola*, nevertheless they do not pinpoint the specific form, nature and significance of the actual *eidolon* intended by the writer, nor do they attempt to define the meaning of actual *worship* of *eidola*, and neither, finally, do they *explain* the relationship, if any, between the *eidola* and the concepts of divinity which they represent or involve.

#### 4.3.4 CONCLUSION

The overwhelming usage of *eidolon* in the pre-Christian world from which the Corinthian believers emerged was in its connection with the human, rather than the divine, and in its portrayal of unreality, rather than reality, an image rather than the real thing. The N.T. and Septuagint emphasis was a negative, polemical condemnation of *eidola*, yet without a detailed description or appraisal of what such worship actually involved. Paul's attempt to use *eidolon* as part of his argument may thus have caused confusion or ambiguity or even a deliberate exploitation of the issue by some Corinthians, on the grounds that *eidola* in *their* understanding did indeed indicate unreality and therefore irrelevance. Image terminology was thus a minefield of ambiguity, boundary issues and conceptual variation which had potential to generate conflicting viewpoints not only between Paul and the Corinthians, but also amongst the Corinthian believers themselves. We need now to pursue and develop our thesis at the ground level of the visible form of images and then at the level of how Corinthians might have mentally perceived image meaning and function.

## 4.4 THE VISIBLE FORM OF IMAGES ON THE GROUND

### 4.4.1 IMAGES IN GREEK AND ORIENTAL CULTS

#### 4.4.1.1 Introduction

Although we now deal with Greco-Oriental cults separately from Roman Imperial Cult, this division actually is artificial. Indeed this is part of the challenge of considering the background to 1 Cor.8-10. If we were to imagine that every temple in Corinth contained a single designated image to a specific single deity, then we would be ignoring

two complicating factors. Firstly, Greek sanctuaries often did have a temple to the chief deity of the sanctuary but they also contained buildings and monuments to other deities.<sup>43</sup> Secondly, the sanctuaries of traditional gods did incorporate the emperor in a variety of ways, either by dedicatory inscriptions or in an exterior part of the temple, by honorific statues within the temple or even by large cult statues in a separate part of the temple.<sup>44</sup> Thus the juxtaposition of images of deities and emperors in close proximity within a temple setting had the potential to create a measure of ambiguity for those, like the Corinthians, involved in such cults. We shall now briefly examine the form of images and the nature of divinity represented by such images, recognizing with Engels (1990: 95) that it is difficult to determine the most important pagan cults in Roman Corinth.

#### 4.4.1.2 Asclepius

Variouly perceived as a mortal, the 'blameless physician' taught his art by Chiron (*The Iliad* 4.219 & 11.832), and as son of Apollo and Coronis, daughter of Phlegyas (Hesiod and Pindar *Pyth.* 3), Asclepius normally was represented as a mature bearded man, similar but milder in expression to Zeus. He was also portrayed as a child (*I.G.* XIV 967a), beardless (by Calamis - Paus. 2, 10, 3) and in new shrines as a sacred snake brought from the mother temple and used in the healing cult. According to E.J. & L. Edelstein,<sup>45</sup> the only real difference between the portrait of Asclepius and that of the great gods was that he always wore a chiton or tunic and in most cases, shoes. Images of Asclepius were made in a wide variety of materials - stone, ivory, wood and metal. The normal dual representation of Asclepius was with staff and serpent. E.J. & L. Edelstein (1945: 229) consider the latter to have probably been a symbol of Asclepius as travelling physician moving from place to place. As his divine power became recognized, the staff lost its original meaning but nevertheless was retained on images. The significance of the snake is much harder to decide but may have been an indicator of the mildness and goodness of Asclepius since these particular snakes had such characteristics. E.J. & L. Edelstein (1945: 230) conclude however with the important point that the snake in itself did not clearly indicate the original nature of the god, since it was found among the Olympians, the chthonic gods *and* the heroes.

We note at this stage that images of Asclepius were found virtually everywhere but that the nature of Asclepius was variously perceived, for as Walton<sup>46</sup> notes,

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<sup>43</sup> See Herodes *Mimes and Fragments - Mime IV: Offerings and Sacrifices*. See also Suetonius, *Tiberius* 26 for multiple deities in the Asclepius sanctuary at Cos.

<sup>44</sup> At Rhodiapolis, a temple and cult statues apparently were dedicated to Asclepius, Hygeia, the Sebastoi and the city, suggesting that all had a share in the temple (*JGR* III, 732-3).

<sup>45</sup> E.J. & L. Edelstein *Asclepius: A Collection and Interpretation of the Testimonies*. Vols. I and II Johns Hopkins Press, Baltimore. 1945 pp.216-7.

<sup>46</sup> Francis R. Walton "Asclepius" in *O.C.D.* Oxford: Clarendon Press 2nd Edn. 1970 S.V.

While many writers have classed Asclepius with the chthonic deities, Farnell has adduced strong evidence to show that he was in origin a hero, later elevated to full divinity; as a god, despite a few chthonian traits (e.g. the snake and possibly the rite of incubation) his associations are with the celestial divinities.

Images of Asclepius frequently appeared alongside those of other divinities.<sup>47</sup> Evidence in literary testimonies of Asclepius' likeness makes reference to his attributes "only occasionally" however (E.J. and L. Edelstein 1945: 226). The perceived significance of these images will be considered shortly but we note at this stage the motivation of those who encountered the cult of Asclepius. Whatever impact the image or cult may or may not have had on the participants, we must not forget that "... to be liberated from disease was their main concern." (E.J. and L. Edelstein 1945: 224).

#### 4.4.1.3 Demeter and Kore

Demeter functioned as the goddess who governed agricultural fruitfulness, particularly bread-corn. Demeter thus became linked with the depths of the earth and in mythology she became mother-in-law, Kore or Persephone the wife of the death-god. Hades had carried off Kore and Demeter searched in vain for her daughter. Eventually Zeus wanted Demeter back in Olympus and he therefore had Kore returned to Demeter. Kore, however, having eaten pomegranate seeds in the other world, was forced to spend part of each year there. Demeter thus had associations with the world of the dead.<sup>48</sup> Thus at an early period of anthropomorphic art, Demeter bore emblems such as corn-stalks, poppies, pomegranate and *kalathos*, the symbol of fruitfulness, "... as well as [by] the symbolism of the nether world, such as torch and serpent."<sup>49</sup> Thus Demeter combined the chthonian and the vegetative, and terracotta images of Demeter, wearing the *kalathos*, emblem of the fruit-bearing power, were buried with the dead. (Farnell 1907: 220). As in Torajanese religion in Indonesia, so in Greek symbolism and belief "the ideas of life and death are blended". (ibid. 1907: 228). Although much detail of the Eleusinian mysteries remains obscure, it is reasonably clear that they were linked with the death and rebirth of corn and eventually with the prospect of human immortality. We have already noted in Chapter 3 Archaeology that in Corinth, the temple of Demeter and Kore had links with Dionysus and, through the existence of curse tablets, with the world of the dead. Farnell lists a range of Classical and Archaic representations of Demeter/Kore including terracottas, coins and busts, and culminating in the Cnidian Demeter from Knidos which

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<sup>47</sup> See Paus. 4, 31, 10 (with his sons at Messenia); Paus. 7, 32, 4 (with Health at Megalopolis); Paus. 5, 26, 2 (with Health at Olympia); Suetonius, *Augustus* 59 (with Antonius Musa, Augustus' own physician, the image being set up by Augustus); Paus. 8, 31, 1 (with Artemis and Health at Megalopolis).

<sup>48</sup> The Athenians used the phrase Δημήτρειοι 'Demeter's people' as a euphemism for the dead. (Plut. *Defac.* 943B).

<sup>49</sup> Lewis R. Farnell *The Cults of the Greek States*. Oxford: Clarendon Press 1907. Vol.III p.217.



reflects both the brightness of the cornfield and the shadow of the sadness of Demeter. As Farnell points out, however, "The literary records of this cult are in some respects fuller and more explicit than the monuments ... it is doubtful if even the later aniconic period has left us any representation or ἄγαλμα to which we may with certainty attach Demeter's name." (1907: 214).

#### 4.4.1.4 Isis and Sarapis

Isis, wife of Osiris and mother of Horus, was an Egyptian national deity who became popular in the wider Mediterranean world in the Hellenistic period. The form of the Isis cult in Greek cities was generally highly Hellenized, having statues and temples of Greek design, with priests who were normally civic functionaries. Isis is portrayed with the Egyptian head-dress, in a long garment with a knot of drapery on the breast, though according to T.A. Brady, in her most Hellenic form "she is shown with serene, ideal, and typically Greek features, with no head-dress but a curl or braid of hair hanging down each side of her face."<sup>50</sup> According to Brady, Isis came to be identified with a whole variety of goddesses, such that "Isis came more and more to mean all things to all men." (ibid). Brady maintains that although Isis could appear externally like a public city-state cult, nevertheless in Greece, and particularly around Corinth, Isis was linked with mysteries and seems to have attracted a particularly "devoted and significant type of worship" [Brady] at a personal level. Any view, however, which plays down the ability of *civic* deities to promote meaningful worship, comes under strong criticism from Price and MacMullen.

Isis has been united with Osiris, the god of the dead, and Greco-Roman women felt a special attachment to Isis in the context of the mourning that accompanied death and the concerns of life after death.<sup>51</sup> Many grave reliefs and tombs demonstrated her symbols and deceased females were often shown on funeral monuments in the costume characteristic of the deity. Plutarch<sup>52</sup> records a fascinating feature of Egyptian feasts where the image (εἶδωλον) of a dead man was carried around in a chest to encourage participants to enjoy their present life. Plutarch later refers to the image of the soul of Osiris as εἰκόνα (362D) and just prior to that, rejects the claims of some that Sarapis is not a god. (362C). He later records the use of earth and water to make a crescent-shaped image (ἀγαλμάτιον) which the people clothe and adorn to show that they regard these gods as the principle of earth and water (366F). The potential for ambiguity of terminology once again recurs. Sarapis was represented with the appearance of Zeus but

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<sup>50</sup> T.A. Brady 'Isis' in *O.C.D.* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2nd Ed. 1970 S.V.

<sup>51</sup> See Sharon K. Heyob *The Cult of Isis among Women in the Greco-Roman World.* E.J. Brill, Leiden 1975 esp. Ch.3 pp.53-80.

<sup>52</sup> Plutarch *Moralia: On Isis and Osiris* 357F. Translation in J. Gwyn Griffiths Ed. *Plutarch's De Iside et Osiride* Univ. of Wales Press, 1970 p.144-5.

also present was the three-headed dog Cerberus, an attribute borrowed from Hades. The upraised left hand, however, held a staff or sceptre characteristic of Zeus or Asclepius. Sarapis was a healing god and preserved features of an underworld god, communicating through dreams and yet taking part in banquets as an Olympian god might have done. Undoubtedly the perceptions of those witnessing images of Isis and Sarapis would not have been uniform or consistent. Multiple interpretation would have been possible in such cultic contexts.

#### 4.4.1.5 The World of the Dead

It is of interest and significance that each of the cults known at some stage in Corinth to have involved communal eating - Asclepius, Demeter/Kore and Isis/Sarapis exhibited not only a measure of ambiguity with respect to the nature of deity, but also had some form of link with the world of the dead.<sup>53</sup> Inevitably our study of images in these Greco-Oriental cults has been brief and limited, but we accept the validity of J. Gwyn Griffiths' comment (*De Iside* 1970: 393) that "like Persephone, Isis had a funerary role which connected her with the underworld." S.R.F. Price has recognized that increasingly in the Hellenistic and Roman periods, sacrifices and feasts became a part of the funeral rites, not only of state heroes but in private family circles, and that the normal type of sacrifice for such occasions was not the non-consumable *enagisma* but rather the part-consumable *thusia*. (*Rituals* 1984: 35-6). Price maintains that in such family circles, the second and third centuries C.E. brought a trend towards deification of the dead "but divine language is being used in this context for a quite different range of evocations about life and death and immortality." (*Rituals* 1984: 50).

Cities could still erect *agalмата*<sup>54</sup> to local dignitaries, these funerary monuments could look like temples and imperial images were taken to graves, but according to Price, "there were no more public celebrations of divine cults of such people." (*Rituals* 1984: 50, 120, 165-6). Such a trend may possibly have been due to imperial jealousy. Price does admit however that such developments were more common in south-west Asia Minor than in Greece itself. That the dead had a role in the lives of the living in Corinth is attested by the 14 recently discovered curse tablets from the Demeter site. Many of the curse tablets bore images in the form of drawings of human beings, animals or mixed creatures, which were seen as having a role in the cursing process. The gods most commonly addressed

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<sup>53</sup> Although this dissertation does make a number of references to the world of the dead, we recognize that the relationship between death and the Corinthian cultic context is a large area which merits further and detailed research by scholars.

<sup>54</sup> A third century C.E. account describes the burial of the Sophist Polemo who lay at Laodicea near the Syrian Gate where there were sepulchres of his ancestors. The term used to describe a supposed statue of Polemo was ἄγαλμα. See *Philostratus and Eunapius: The Lives of the Sophists*. English Translation by W.C. Wright. LCL 1922 Section 543 pp.134-5.

were Hermes, Hekate Kore, Persephone, Hades and Demeter.<sup>55</sup> On Latin tablets, however, the most common names were the *Manes* (spirits of deceased ancestors), Jupiter, Pluto (Greek Hades), Nemesis, Mercury (Greek Hermes) and various water nymphs. On occasion, dolls or figurines were employed as part of the binding process, intended targets having their hands tied behind their backs. The tablets were most commonly deposited in graves<sup>56</sup> and the dead souls were employed in the cursing process, though it is accepted as being unclear whether these souls transmitted the request to the gods or whether they actually carried out the spell themselves. Such tablets, with their potent inscribed images, help us to view the lives of ordinary people whose voices would otherwise seldom be heard. They also indicate, from their temple context, the difficulty of upholding distinctions between magic on the one hand and religion on the other.

#### 4.4.2 IMAGES IN THE ROMAN IMPERIAL CULT

##### 4.4.2.1 Location

Once more, the scholar who seeks clear-cut divisions and categories will be disappointed in the realm of imperial images, for even where the latter are clearly evidenced, it is by no means clear what ritual accompanied their presence. Price believes that Roman practices were institutionalized in Roman colonies but that the ritual of imperial cult in Greek cities actually was "strongly Greek". (*Rituals* 1984: 89). Moreover he maintains that elite individuals or groups certainly adopted practices of the ruling Roman power but that this strategy only made sense because most of the community continued to maintain *Greek* traditions (*Rituals* 1984: 90).

Imperial images were to be found in a wide variety of locations. Pausanias writing in the 2nd Century C.E. for example notes that *stadia* could contain cult statues and temples.<sup>57</sup> *Gymnasia*<sup>58</sup> were locations for imperial sacrifices and banquets. The central square of civic centres also served as a location for the paraphernalia of imperial cult.<sup>59</sup> As far as the association of such locations with dining is concerned, however, there appears to be little evidence of permanent banqueting rooms, but Price does express a view which accords extremely well with the current archaeological consensus at Corinth,

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<sup>55</sup> John G. Gager Ed. *Curse Tablets and Binding Spells from the Ancient World*. Oxford Univ. Press 1992 p.12.

<sup>56</sup> A young man's grave of the Roman imperial period near Corinth yielded three defixiones to excavators in 1961. (Reported by D.R. Jordan "A Survey of Greek Defixiones not included in the Special Corpora" in *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* Vol.26 No.2 (Summer 1985) p.151.)

<sup>57</sup> See, for example, the close relationship between athletic sites, temple precincts and images in Pausanias *Corinth* 32, 3; 34, 10 and *Arcadia* 32, 3; 47, 4.

<sup>58</sup> An example from Acraephia in Boeotia is recorded in *SEG* Vol. XV, 330 lines 13-14, 1958 *Lugduni Batavorum Apud* A.W. Sijthoff. This is dated around 42 C.E.

<sup>59</sup> A detailed list of Augustan images and altars in the *agora* area of Athens has been published by A. Benjamin and A.E. Raubitschek in "*Arae Augusti*", *Ilesperia* 28 (1959) pp.65-85.

namely "... but tents, of course, would leave no trace in the archaeological record." (*Rituals* 1984: 109 n.51). It is important to note that most imperial statues in the Greek world were actually erected by Greeks themselves, with the aim of expressing gratitude and honour to the emperor or benefactor.

One particular location of imperial images deserves our attention, namely the *Kaisersaal* or rectangular hall incorporated into the design of imperial bathing complexes across Asia Minor. A feature of immediate importance is that it was common in buildings to find dedications of the parts or the whole of it to the emperor and his family jointly with the gods of the state. Thus, for example, an inscription found in the *exedra* of the Middle Gymnasium at Pergamon<sup>60</sup> records a dedication to *theoi Sebastoi* - the 'new gods' Augustus and Livia - alongside the traditional gods, Hermes and Herakles. The room was apparently used for joint worship of Emperor *and* traditional deities. Likewise, we have evidence of a local festival of the Saviour Sebastoi in the sanctuary of Asclepius at Pergamum.<sup>61</sup> Moreover gymnasia were locations for hero and funerary cults and the potential for ambiguity would not be surprising, for as Yegül (1982: 14) concludes - "Sometimes the worship of the ruler was combined with that of one or more of the traditional gods." *Kaisareion* and *Sebasteion* are thus examples of the -eion ending which indicated, as in Paul's *eidoleion*, a temple or place of *eidola*. Yegül argues that the *Kaisersaal* was used for *symposia* on certain civic and religious occasions. In view of Prof. Bookidis' previously mentioned doubts about the use of the Demeter and Asclepius dining rooms in the mid first century C.E., when Paul wrote to the Corinthians, we must give serious thought to the possibility that the meals were being eaten in some other 'place of idols', such as a Gymnasium, Hall or athletic games location. In his work on the *Kaisersaal*, however, Yegül makes a point which needs to be borne in mind, namely that, with the exception of the Middle Gymnasium at Pergamon, no evidence definitely reveals an actual devotional image of the emperor. He thus describes the *Kaisersaal* as a kind of 'Hall of Honor' for the ruling emperor and Imperial family, thus different from the temple-cult and yet nevertheless a "religious place" for cult at a more popular and private level. (1982: 30-31). If so there would be scope for participants to attach non-cultic or non-divine significance to the imperial images represented there.

Thus the complicated situation emerges in which the actual location of an imperial image cannot be used as a tool to predict its function. It would seem that at any one time, 'cult-receiving statues' and 'non-cult-receiving statues' seem to have existed in close proximity during a festival of imperial cult. Neither does terminology, in and of itself, help us. At Pergamon, for example, the *same* type of inscriptions were placed beneath the *agalma* of Attalus III (approximately 170-133 B.C.E.) in the temple of Asclepius and

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<sup>60</sup> *IGR* IV No. 318, Lines 1-2.

<sup>61</sup> E. Bochringer *Altertümer von Pergamon* Band VIII, 3 Walter de Gruyter & Co., Berlin 1969 No. 36 p.80-82. Inv. 1929.13 and 1929.26.

beneath the *eikon* in the main square.<sup>62</sup> Most imperial images catalogued by Price indicated statue bases with names written in the accusative but there were some in the dative, possibly suggesting a 'religious' overtone, although the dative case *per se* does not tell us decisively whether honour, respect or worship was involved.

#### 4.4.2.2 Types

As the locations of imperial images varied widely, so also did the various forms of representation. Emperors were sometimes depicted in the form of busts, and this was also a form used to represent traditional deities in Asia Minor in their temples. Emperors could also be represented as full statues in armour or as naked statues, and coins of Selinus and Cilicia from three different reigns in the second and third centuries C.E. show Trajan within his temple enthroned as Zeus holding thunderbolt and sceptre. Thus it was quite possible for imperial statues to be shown with the attributes of the gods and Agrippina, wife of Claudius, was depicted on the coins of various cities with ears of corn and poppies which were characteristic of Demeter.<sup>63</sup> Gaius is described as calling for certain famous statues of the gods and removing their heads, so as to put his own in their place.<sup>64</sup> Gaius actually set up a temple to his own godhead, with appointed priests and sacrifices. It will become apparent in our research on sacrifice, however, that sometimes emperors, as objects of cults, were actually shown as priests, whilst gods were also shown making sacrificial offerings. Moreover, in terms of size, the emperor could be depicted, like the gods, on more than human scale. For example, the Sicyonians erected a statue of King Attalus, ten cubits high, and placed it next to that of Apollo in their market-place. (Polybius Bk. 18, 16, 2) Likewise the Rhodians erected, in the temple of Athena, a statue of the Roman people thirty cubits high. (Polybius Bk. 31, 4, 4).

#### 4.4.2.3 Appearance

Portrait statues of Augustus and Tiberius, found at the Roman stratification level in Corinth, are significant. The image of Augustus is a draped male figure in the guise of a priest, or magistrate, pouring a sacrificial libation. This of course raises the question of his

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<sup>62</sup> *OGIS* Vol.1 (ed. W. Dittenberger, 1903-5) 332, Lines 21-3 and 24-6.

<sup>63</sup> This statue, probably dated around 37-40 C.E., is located at the museum in Cos and is featured in C.C. Vermeule *Roman Imperial Art in Greece and Asia Minor* Harvard U.P. 1968, 193.

<sup>64</sup> Suetonius *The Lives of the Caesars* Bk. IV Gaius Caligula, 22. Translation J.C. Rolfe, L.C.L. 1914.

own relationship to divinity. Swift<sup>65</sup> has argued that clay or waxen models - *imagines* - were sent out from Rome to be reproduced in the provinces and that images of similar appearance frequently were used to represent the dead at funerals. On imperial images, the presence of the rayed crown was considered to be a mark of deification, an issue which will be evaluated in due course. Certainly at the funeral of Gaius himself in Rome, altars, temples and statues were erected in his honor, though whilst he received divine honours in Mitylene, it was as hero that Acerrae remembered him.<sup>66</sup> Indeed it needs to be noted that in Rome at least, such actions and attitudes surrounding Gaius were beyond normal and acceptable bounds. Amongst the aristocratic classes, in a manner somewhat reminiscent of the Torajanese situation in Indonesia, face masks of deceased family members<sup>67</sup> were used at funerals to commemorate the words and gestures of the deceased and after the burial or burning, another mask was made and mounted on a bust, as an effigy of the departed, which was then set up in a wooden frame in the form of a small temple. The public parading of images of deceased prominent figures in the midst of images of the Emperor<sup>68</sup> and images of the gods must have created, in a festival atmosphere, the problem of ambiguity regarding such boundaries as divine/human and worship/honour. The door was open to a range of views, for as Price admits (*Rituals* 1984: 185) "... the emperor could not be neatly placed in a single compartment, and some of the statues clearly straddled categories. Neither could the élite use of *imagines* be placed in compartments - for some it involved preserving memory of the dead or reanimating their personality but it also reasserted the power and authority of the élite."

#### 4.5 THE PERCEIVED NATURE OF IMAGES IN THE JEWISH MIND

The seeming paradox of ancient rituals and representations has been highlighted by R.L. Gordon ("The Real and the Imaginary" 1979: 26) -

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<sup>65</sup> E.H. Swift. "A Group of Roman Imperial Portraits at Corinth" in *AJA* (Nos. 1, 3, 4) 2nd. Ser. Vol.25 (1921). R. Gordon has argued that after the death of Augustus, imperial images in the provinces showed a progressively declining representation of the emperor as the veiled sacrificant. This might be argued as indicating that the emperors gradually themselves became the recipients of worship. Dogmatism, however, is unwise in this regard. See R. Gordon "The Veil of Power: emperors, sacrificers and benefactors" in *Pagan Priests: Religion and Power in the Ancient World* Eds. Mary Beard & John North, Duckworth, 1990 pp.199-231 esp. p.213.

<sup>66</sup> Dio in his *Roman History* Bk. 59.26:3 - 28:8 indicates that some called Gaius a 'god' while others termed him a 'demigod' or 'hero'. Gaius himself claimed a wide range of identities greater than those of a human being or Emperor.

<sup>67</sup> Effigies of the deceased for use at funerals are attested in many sources, e.g. Pliny *Natural History* Bk. 35 Lines 6 & 153; Cicero, *Against Piso* 1, 1; Tacitus, *Ann.* 3, 5 and Polybius 6, 53, 1-6.

<sup>68</sup> The potential for ambiguity can be seen with regard to imperial images, as recorded in Suetonius *Caesar* 76; Dio 56, 34; Pliny *Letters* 10, 96, 5.

Rituals contain not only repetition but also discontinuity, disparity, jokes. The search for structure has always to be compromised by awareness of anti-structure. And we have seen that the ancient world was only too aware of the ambiguous status of religious representations. As potent things-in-the-world, representations are the victim of a multiplicity of private evocations, which cannot be censored; they enter dreams and fantasies, and thus legitimate actions, including religious innovation. As jokes, they constitute standing doubts about the collective project of sensemaking of which they are the product. As artefacts made by human hands they are subject to the very decay and change which they negate as divine representations; they can be honoured and dishonoured, subject to men's whims. The meanings they construct constantly leak away.

We shall argue that ancient images generated a range of perspectives and attitudes among those who beheld them. Our consideration of this hypothesis begins with Jewish attitudes for two reasons. Firstly the one group among which one might reasonably have expected to find a uniform attitude to images is that of Rabbinic Judaism. Secondly we shall use Jewish perspectives as a case-study of the fact that different attitudes to Gentile images inevitably produced different definitions of 'idolatry'. E.E. Urbach<sup>69</sup> for example has noted significant differences of opinion among rabbis and explains this divergence "by their different conceptions of what constituted an idol", based apparently on "different actual experiences". Material from Mishnah and Talmud is admittedly well after 1 Cor. in date, but it does demonstrate diversity of viewpoint. R. Meir for example took the line that even if an image was worshipped only once a year and even if a particular image type was known to be worshipped in Rome, rather than in its present location, then the image was forbidden in his opinion and had to be desecrated by physical disfigurement using a hammer. R. Simeon, however, felt that the mere pushing over of an image constituted desecration. In further contrast, Rabbi forbade only those images which could be proved to have been worshipped, for it is known that many Gentiles kept images for ornamental, decorative purposes and were ready to desecrate them when necessary. Rabbi argued that an idol was desecrated merely by being sold or given in pledge since such an action was evidence that the Gentile intended to divest the shape of the idol of any possible divine significance. (*Tosefta, Abodah Zarah* iv, 7). Some Gentiles made idolatrous objects but for those people, no worship was intended nor was there any sense of divine representation. Rabbah, for example, distinguished between images made in villages for worship and those made in towns for ornaments. (*Mishnah A.Z.* 3.1) Controversy arose, however, regarding the perceived function of images in towns. (*Bab. Talmud A.Z.* 40b - 41a.) Even within Rabbinic Judaism, therefore, no uniform consensus existed regarding the nature and significance of images.

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<sup>69</sup> E.E. Urbach "The Rabbinical Laws of Idolatry in the Second and Third Centuries in the Light of Archaeological and Historical Facts" in *Israel Exploration Journal* Vol.9 No.3 (1959) pp.149-165 and 229-245. Quotation from p.231.

In the post 70 C.E. era, following the destruction of Jerusalem, and indeed before then, it was inevitable that Jews would find themselves living in close proximity to Gentiles in cities and the issue of competition between Jewish and Gentile craftsmen would quickly arise. Even within Rabbinical circles, however, a divergence of attitude is discernible. According to R. Eliezer, for example,<sup>70</sup> "None may make ornaments for an idol: necklaces or earrings or finger-rings". R. Eliezer says, "If for payment it is permitted." Thus at the opening of the second century C.E., R. Eliezer allowed the making and sale of idolatrous objects intended for Gentiles. In a Baraita, R. Akiba, a disciple of R. Eliezer, states that "the idol of a Gentile is straightway forbidden, but that of an Israelite is not forbidden unless it has been worshipped."<sup>71</sup> In such a situation, R. Simeon ben Lakish contends that a Gentile craftsman who has made an idol for sale in the market must definitely have offered worship to it already. Such an idol is certainly forbidden. By contrast, a Jewish craftsman will not have worshipped his product and therefore he is free to sell it to a Gentile. R. Jeremiah even extends the dispensation of R. Johanan's not only to the building of the dome of a basilica but to the construction of the idol itself.<sup>72</sup>

Jewish craftsmen, in justifying their trade in 'idolatry' had two key weapons in their arsenal. Firstly they could argue that idols had no efficacy or power in the eyes of Gentiles themselves. The Aggadah and Halakhah incorporated such a position. For example, the Tanna R. Nehemiah constructs the following conversation between Moses and God following the golden calf incident -

(Moses) said: Lord of the Universe, they have provided assistance for you, how then can you be angry with them? This calf which they have made will be your assistant; you will make the sun rise and it the moon, you the stars and it the constellations, you will make the dew fall, and it will make the winds blow, you will bring down rain and it will cause plants to grow. The Holy One Blessed be He answered: Moses, can you be so misguided as they?! See, it is worthless! Moses retorted: Then why are you angry with your children? (Exod. Rabbah, 43, 6).

Such an example of course immediately recalls the assertion recorded in 1 Cor.8:4 οὐδὲν εἰδωλον ἐν κόσμῳ and it was on this sort of basis that craftsmen could argue their case. Similarly, R. Simeon ben Lakish held that an idol, from which portions had fallen off, was

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<sup>70</sup> Mishnah Abodah Zarah i, 8.

<sup>71</sup> Mishnah Abodah Zarah iv, 4. By contrast, R. Ishmael had argued that the idol of an idolater was not prohibited until it was worshipped, whereas if it belonged to an Israelite, it was prohibited forthwith. (Babylonian Talmud: *Abodah Zarah* 4.51b).

<sup>72</sup> See Bab. Talmud A.Z. Ch.1, 16a-19b. In sharp contrast, however, is the account rendered by Josephus, *Contra Apionem* I, 192-3 on the authority of Hekataios, of the Jews of Babylon who were tortured severely rather than obey Alexander the Great's command to help in the rebuilding of the ruined temple of Bel. Mishnah, A.Z. 1.7 had actually forbidden Jews from assisting idolaters in their building of a basilica or idol.



permitted because the Gentile said "If it did not save itself, how can it save me?"<sup>73</sup> Alongside this argument of the worthlessness of idols, craftsmen could justify their business on economic grounds. For example they could simply say "it is my livelihood" or like Jonathan ben Gershom ben Manasseh, could claim "there is a traditional saying in our family: Earn your living by making idols and do not be dependent on charity."<sup>74</sup>

A range of Rabbinical views on the nature of an idol thus generated a variety of attitudes toward idolatry itself. P.R. Trebilco<sup>75</sup> rightly argues that "the rabbinic legislation on this subject (idolatry) is not uniform, some rulings demonstrate severity, others leniency, which indicates how difficult the problem was in concrete situations and the debate it created." Trebilco goes on to suggest the range of ways in which Jewish communities in Asia Minor reacted to pagan religious activities, particularly festivals.<sup>76</sup> Whilst Trebilco admits paucity of evidence for Jewish attitudes and responses toward pagan cult, he does feel justified in suggesting that "... there was a range of opinions on the matter amongst Jews in Asia Minor..." (1991: 183). Such was the range and complexity of image evocation that it was extremely difficult in practice to define the nature and boundaries of 'idolatry'. We contend that the latter term evoked a wide range of definition and response,<sup>77</sup> because of the existence of real ambiguities, boundary complexity and conceptual differences between those inside a religion and those viewing it from the outside, and even between different viewpoints both inside and outside a religion. We suggest that Paul's starting-point was different from that of the predominantly Gentile Corinthians, but even here, the operative word is *complexity*, for it is by no means clear just which Jewish position was adopted by Paul himself.

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<sup>73</sup> Bab. Talmud, *Abodah Zara* 41b. We recall a significant encounter reported in Mishnah, A.Z. 3.4 in which Proclus, son of a philosopher, criticizes R. Gamaliel in Acco for bathing in a pool dedicated to Aphrodite. Gamaliel justifies his practice on a number of grounds, including the fact that the bath already existed *before* the image of Aphrodite was set up there. He also argues that whatever is not treated as a deity, is in fact permitted. He reasons that pagans would not appear before a revered statue and urinate in front of it, yet this is precisely what was happening to the image of Aphrodite, located as it was by a sewer. The Babylonian Talmud, A.Z. 3.44b indicates a *variety* of Rabbinic responses to this intriguing incident.

<sup>74</sup> Jer. Talmud, *Berakhot* ix, 2; *Baba Batra* 110a.

<sup>75</sup> Paul R. Trebilco *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor* Cambridge. Univ. Press 1991 p.262 n.56.

<sup>76</sup> Trebilco lists five options, and degrees of involvement along with some primary evidence, as follows - total avoidance of pagan cults; involvement in pagan institutions but not in the associated pagan rites themselves; attendance at the theatre but non-involvement in pagan worship; attendance at pagan ceremonies but avoidance of actual ritual; active involvement in pagan worship. (*Jewish Communities* 1991: 180-182).

<sup>77</sup> That the range and variety was one of practice, as well as belief, is clear from A.F. Segal, *Paul the Convert: The Apostolate and Apostasy of Saul the Pharisee* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990) 231, who argues that many Jews may well have eaten with Gentiles - "There was obviously a range of practice that we cannot precisely reconstruct..."

## 4.6 THE PERCEIVED NATURE OF GRECO-ORIENTAL IMAGES

### 4.6.1 INTRODUCTION

Writing in the context of Greek religion, Price (*Rituals* 1984: 201) has made a profound statement which merits serious consideration -

In general Greek religion was an iconic religion whose temples were built to shelter a representation of the god. The *nexus* of temple, anthropomorphic cult statue and sacrifice formed part of the Greeks' awareness of their own cultural identity in contrast with their neighbours, thus making a general rejection of the *nexus* very difficult. The strategy of representing the gods in human form in fact remained the norm.

We believe this to be of fundamental importance and relevance in the context of cultic festivals. We have already seen that if the Torajanese of modern Indonesia rejected their cultic feasts, involving images, sacrifices and communal eating, then many of them believe that in doing so, they would lose their ethnic identity and indeed their entire socio-cultural life. The problem here is encapsulated in the very term *nexus*. Life was indivisible; neat boundaries did not exist; remove one domino and the whole structure would tumble. Ambiguity and boundary definition problems made image perception a minefield of complexity. On top of that there was the issue of conceptual differences and it is for this reason that we shall consider within Chapter 4 not only the perceived nature, meaning and functions of images but also the perceived relationships between images and the divine/human spectrum represented by them. The importance of all these relationships ultimately affects how people perceived the actual significance of images. A brief example is that noted by F.K. Yegül who refers, though without specific citation details (1982: 26 note 92), to a decree found in Athens in which it is recorded that the Guild of Dionysiac actors - *technitae*- placed the *agalma* of Ariarthes V of Cappadocia next to the god, to crown it with a wreath, offer incense to it and illuminate it with torches. A second image - *eikon* - placed in the *propylaea* of the *temenos* received sacrifices. According to Yegül, Nock interpreted all of this "merely as an expression of gratitude." Yegül on the contrary saw it as a case of "emperor worship" and a description of "cult ritual". The borderline between gratitude and respect for an earthly leader on the one hand and worship of a divinity on the other hand, is yet another ambiguous ingredient for the complex melting-pot of image perceptions in the Greco-Roman world.

### 4.6.2 PERCEPTIONS OF IMAGE FUNCTIONS

One incentive and challenge to consider primary evidence of perceptions of images comes from the work of R. MacMullen (1981: 44-5) who describes the routine work of sextons in opening the temples in a morning, singing a hymn, offering a sacrifice and then closing the doors. He refers here to Sarapis, Asclepius and Dionysus, but whilst he admits to wide variation in accessibility to temple precincts, he believes that the lack of pattern of practice and the general absence of mention of gods seen in their own dwellings "suggests

that idols played no very active part in the ongoing life of their cult."<sup>78</sup> According to MacMullen, what really counted far more than the presence of an image was the activity carried out by participants around the precincts. This certainly raises the question of the perceived role of images in cultic festivals and it is to this spectrum of significance that we now turn.

Even to attempt categories or classifications of attitudes to images is problematic for the whole subject is pervaded by the impossible, the irrational and the ambiguous. A number of attitudes are revealed, for example, concerning the cult of Asclepius. The third or fourth century C.E., sophist, Callistratus attempted a description of Asclepius' image, not as a mere image but as a powerful reality infused with the god's presence. (*Descriptions*, 10) . In the view of E.J. & L. Edelstein (1945: 220-223), any attempt to depict the likeness of Asclepius "was a difficult task indeed." They believe that Callistratus' description was an idealized view which probably never existed in concrete form. There was always bound to be a gap between the representation and the reality of the god concerned. Nevertheless in his description of the image of Asclepius at Sicyon (*Corinth*, 10, 3), Pausanias writes about seeing the 'god'. (*theos*). Another reference to the image of Asclepius is in the work of the 4th century C.E. Greek rhetorician Libanius who described the statue of Asclepius in Beroea (*Oration* 30, 22-23). He describes the sheer beauty of the statue and people's longing to behold it continually. Then he makes the interesting comment that "no one [sc., of the Christians] was so shameless that he would dare to say that sacrifices were offered to this statue."<sup>79</sup> The statue however had been broken up and scattered, to the despair of Libanius. The potential for ambiguity regarding the perceived nature of images can be seen in the case of the sanctuary of Asclepius at Titane recorded by Pausanias (*Corinth*, 11, 5-7). The images of Asclepius and Health are described as not easily visible. There are also images of Alexanor who receives night-time offerings as to a hero, whilst the image of Euamerion receives burnt sacrifices as a god. Many other images are present, including that of a Sicyonian athlete called Granianus. Offerings of a bull, lamb and a pig are mentioned as being made to the god, but it is then noted that because of fear of the serpents, the people "place their food before the entrance and take no further trouble."<sup>80</sup> Ambiguity over the nature of the images was thus at least a possibility. A strange occurrence is recorded by Polybius<sup>81</sup> in

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<sup>78</sup> Such a view is reflected by Walter Burkert (*Greek Religion - Archaic and Classical* Tr. John Raffan. Blackwell 1985 p.89), who argues that in terms of living cult, divine images "remained more a side-show than a centre." M.I. Finley ("Foreword" in P.E. Easterling & J.V. Muir Eds. *Greek Religion and Society* Cambridge Univ. Press 1985 pp.xvi-xvii), likewise argues that with limited space and access within many temples, worship activity was often carried on well away from the actual images themselves.

<sup>79</sup> Translation by E.J. & L. Edelstein *Asclepius* 1945: 350.

<sup>80</sup> Pausanias *Descriptions of Greece. Corinth*, 11, 8. Translation by W.H.S. Jones. LCL 1969.

<sup>81</sup> Polybius *The Histories* Bk. 32,15, 1-5. Translation by W.R. Paton LCL 1975.

which Prusias reached Pergamum after his victory over Attalus in 155-4 B.C.E. He prepared a huge sacrifice of oxen at the temple of Asclepius and after receiving favourable omens, he returned to his camp. On the very next day, however, he destroyed all the temples and sacred precincts of the gods, even carrying off the actual statue of Asclepius which he had just supplicated for help on the previous day. Subsequently, for this attitude towards images, and because of other evil deeds, Polybius describes Prusias as being out of his mind (32, 15, 8). Further, Polybius somewhat ambiguously surmises that the subsequent hunger and dysentery of his infantry 'seemed' to indicate the vengeance of heaven because of these misdeeds. (32, 15, 14). Attitudes towards the image of Asclepius were thus by no means uniform, consistent or predictable.

There is no doubt that some viewed images as potent forces involving some form of supernatural power and intervention. Pausanias (Bk 7, 22, 2-3) for example, records an image of Hermes at Pharae in Achaia. Worshippers made sacrifices, burnt incense and approached the image, whispering questions into its ears. Following this, they put their fingers into their ears and hurried away for some considerable distance before removing their fingers. The first words they heard after doing so were reckoned to be the god's oracular response to their request. In the second century C.E. Lucian<sup>82</sup> writes about an image of Apollo in the Atargatis' temple at the Syrian town of Bambyke in Hieropolis. This statue could move on its throne when the spirit possessed it and when the high priest addressed questions to it, the statue moved backwards if the god gave a negative answer and vice versa. Statues could function as a mouthpiece of the god's voice, as for example, in Tacitus *Annals* 12, 22 (late 1st century C.E.) which records a narrative about the persecution by the younger Agrippina of a rival in the race to marry the emperor Claudius. Among the evidence of the rival's visits to 'Chaldaeans and Sorcerers' is also a supplication to the statue of Clarios Apollo for an oracle answer concerning the royal marriage. Images could also be viewed as powerful fetishes in magical practice<sup>83</sup> and as possessing power in themselves in the theurgy of a much later period. E.R. Dodds argues that even from the first century C.E., images were being manufactured and animated with power for magical practices.<sup>84</sup> Dio Cassius (Bk. 41, 61) records a warning omen around 48 B.C.E. when on the day of the battle of Pharsalos, the image of the goddess of Victory (Nike)

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<sup>82</sup> Lucian *The Goddess of Surrye*, 36. Translation by A.M. Harmon LCL, 1925.

<sup>83</sup> Curse invocations involved images being carved on stones and worn as amulets. See Karl Preisendanz *Papyri Graecae Magicae* Vol.1 Teubner Stuttgart, 1928 i, 144f. Also iv 297f. for images in a love-charm.

<sup>84</sup> E.R. Dodds *The Greeks and the Irrational* Univ. of California Press 1951 p.294.

turned towards the image of Julius Caesar in the temple of Tralles.<sup>85</sup>

At the opposite end of the spectrum of image perspective, there were those who, to varying degrees, ridiculed images and poked fun at those who revered such images. Even as early as 500 B.C.E., Heraclitus of Ephesus attacked the cult of images in Greek popular religion.<sup>86</sup> He ridiculed those who tried to purify themselves with blood when they were defiled with that very same substance. He then added - "they *pray to* these statues! - (which is) as though one were to (try to) carry on a conversation with *houses*, without any recognition of who gods and heroes (really) are." The third century B.C.E. Stoic, Chrysippus, proclaimed his view that to represent gods in human shape was childish.<sup>87</sup> Herein however lies an anomaly, for whilst early Stoicism opposed idol worship and temple building, nevertheless after Posidonius (2nd century B.C.E.) and certainly by the Empire, it had assimilated the practices of popular piety. Thus Plutarch was able to report that the Stoics, while agreeing that temples of the gods ought not to be built since a temple not worth much is not sacred, nevertheless "attend the mysteries in temples, go up to the Acropolis, do reverence to statues, and place wreaths upon the shrines, though these are works of builders and mechanics."<sup>88</sup> Augustine in his *City of God* 6, 10 notes the lost treatise *On Superstition* written by Seneca in the period 31-60's C.E. Seneca criticizes those who made images of immortal gods out of cheap material. He mocks women at the Capitol who stand at a distance from the images of Juno and Minerva and mime the actions of dressing their hair. A man pretends to anoint Jupiter yet Seneca supports the maintenance of such rites out of a sense of custom and tradition, not because they bring pleasure to the gods. Lucian in his work 'On Sacrifices' pours scorn on the idea of making images and of expecting gods to respond to sacrifices. (9ff). Clement of Alexandria in the late 2nd century C.E. records the occasion when Dionysius the younger of Syracuse stripped an image of Zeus of its mantle of gold and replaced it by a

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<sup>85</sup> Such experiences of powerful influence were of course open to manipulation, for example, human voices under the statue in a secret inner room - See Plutarch, *De defectu oraculorum*, 50. See further details in F. Poulsen "Talking, Weeping and Bleeding Sculptures: A Chapter of the History of Religious Fraud" in *Acta Archaeologica* (Copenhagen) 1945 v.16. R. MacMullen records the Greek pagans of 2nd century C.E. who attributed miracles to statues of men and he concludes "So ready were people to attribute powers to images even of mortals, so ready to see the divine even in their fellows!" (1981: 59-60).

<sup>86</sup> See T.M. Robinson *Heraclitus of Ephesus: Fragment 5 Text and Translation*, with a commentary. (Univ. of Toronto Press 1987). Robinson makes the point that Heraclitus is speaking about ordinary, unenlightened people and adds that Heraclitus "would not have been the first or the last Greek to believe in one god and many gods simultaneously, the 'one god' (*to sophon*) 'that which is wise' [Fragment 108] being in effect the supreme, and ultimately the only important one in his pantheon."

<sup>87</sup> See Hans von Arnim *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta* Vol. II, 1076, 1903-5. The term *παιδαιρωδῶς* is employed for this purpose.

<sup>88</sup> Plutarch *On Stoic Self-Contradictions* 1034 B-C in *Moralia*. Translation by Harold Cherniss in LCL 1976.

woollen one, remarking that the god would find the woollen one both lighter and warmer in winter.<sup>89</sup> This account immediately continues with the case of Antiochus of Cyzicus who was short of money and therefore melted down the huge golden statue of Zeus and replaced it with a cheap version covered in gold leaf. Diogenes Laertius<sup>90</sup> writing probably in the early 3rd century C.E., notes an interesting dialogue in which Stilpo traps a disputant by asking "Athena is the daughter of Zeus, is she not?" 'Yes'. But this Athena (pointing to the image) was not produced by Zeus but by Phidias? Opponent agrees. 'Then', Stilpo concludes, 'Athena is not a goddess'. It was this issue of representation on which Plutarch passed comment - "... there are some among the Greeks who have not learned nor habituated themselves to speak of the bronze, the pointed, and the stone effigies as statues of the gods and dedications in their honour, but they call them gods; and then they have the effrontery to say that Lachores stripped Athena, that Dionysius sheared Apollo of the golden locks..."<sup>91</sup>

In between those who viewed images as credible and those who saw them as incredible, there were those who treated images as symbolic aids to devotion and as having no other significance than that. Maximus of Tyre in the 2nd century C.E. is representative of such a view -

Why should I examine and lay down laws any further concerning images? Let men know the race of gods, let them but know it. If Greeks are stirred up to remembrance of God by the artistry of Pheidias, Egyptians by their cult of animals, if a river does as much for others and fire for others again, I will find no fault with their dissonance; let them but know, let them but desire, let them but remember.<sup>92</sup>

Similarly the appreciation of images as works of art is apparent in the 5th century B.C.E. Euripides' *Ion* where the chorus picks out and admires the images of Herakles, Athena and others on the outside of Apollo's temple at Delphoi. (Lines 184-218). In like manner, Dio Chrysostom (*Or. Bk. 12, 50-52*) engaged in 97 C.E. at Olympia in an imaginary scrutiny of the craftsman Pheidias (or Phidias) and praised the splendid appearance of the

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<sup>89</sup> Clement of Alexandria *The Exhortation to the Greeks* Part 1 Section 46 p.116-8. Translation by G.W. Butterworth LCL 1919.

<sup>90</sup> Diogenes Laertius 2, 11, 116. Translated by R.D. Hicks LCL 1925.

<sup>91</sup> Plutarch *Moralia, Isis and Osiris* 379 C-D. Translation by F.C. Babbitt LCL 1936.

<sup>92</sup> Maximus of Tyre 8th Discourse *If We Should Set Up Statues to gods*. H.J. Rose, in rendering this translation, claims that even by the Hellenistic period, the thoughtful believer in traditional gods viewed images in much the same way as orthodox members of older Christian Churches might use an ikon or crucifix as devotional aids. See H.J. Rose "Concerning Images" in *Some Problems of Classical Religion*. (The Eitrem Lectures delivered at University of Oslo March 1955. Pub. Universitetet I Oslo Klassisk Institutt, Oslo Univ. Press 1958 p.40.) An example of the soothing effect of a sight of a ruler's image on the fearful and troubled observer is given by Walter Scott Ed. *Corpus Hermetica* Vol. I, XVIII, 16. (Oxford, Clarendon Press 1924.) The text occurs in the context of the intervention and help of God. This material was compiled between the first and third centuries C.E. and concerned the deification of humans through knowledge of God.

statue of Zeus, so attractive that it is said even bulls would willingly be slaughtered at this altar and even the most troubled of souls would experience peace and calm in contemplating the image.

#### 4.6.3 PERCEPTIONS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN IMAGE AND DIVINITY

We have seen the great range of viewpoints which existed regarding the perceived functions of images. Alongside, and in relationship with this complexity, there was basic ambiguity concerning the link between image and divinity. In Aeschylus (5th century B.C.E.) *The Suppliant Maidens* 218, Poseidon appears to be represented by a trident, not by a statue holding a trident, though the latter frequently was to be found. The context around the verse ὄρω τρίαιναν τήνδε σημεῖον θεοῦ, ("I see a trident here, sign/token of a god") however, clearly speaks of a living reality of power. Such an example, argues H.J. Rose (1958: 40), serves to show the confusion in Greece "between symbol and reality". That of course is Rose's own perspective and he argues further that when a Greek priest placed a βρέτας - image of a god - in his temple, there is no evidence whatsoever that he ever said "This is not a piece of carved wood, but Aphrodite; this is not a stone but Apollo ... " (1958: 42). What Rose presumably means is that there is no evidence of such a position in the available literature.

Pausanias (6, 11, 2-9) records the fascinating story of the athlete Theagenes who lifted a bronze ἄγαλμα in the market place and carried it home. The citizens were horrified and enraged by this act but an elderly man intervened and Theagenes was allowed to return this image to the market place. As a result, he became famous for his strength and on his death, an image - εἰκόνα - was made for him. An enemy of his, however, came and beat the statue as if he were ill treating Theagenes himself. The statue - ἀνδριᾶς - fell on the man, whose sons promptly prosecuted the statue for murder. The image was thus dropped into the sea but when their land produced no crops, the Thasians consulted the Pythian priestess who reminded them about Theagenes. The image of the latter was then recovered from the sea and set up for sacrifices as to a god. Such a chain of incidents raises complex questions concerning the perceived relationships between image, humanity and divinity.

The story told in Aristophanes (*Knights* 1165-70) in the 5th century B.C.E. tells of two politicians trying to compete in their flattery of Demos. The Paphlagonian fetches him a chair, the Sausage-Seller a table. The former then offers a roll while the latter provides soft breads hollowed out into the shape of spoons and tells him that they were spooned out by the Goddess with her ivory hand. This was a reference to the enormous chryselephantine statue of Athena in the Parthenon. Demos seems impressed that the image has acted on his behalf and remarks that the goddess has a very large finger. Admittedly this is comedy material but we do know that cult-statues were bathed and dressed by the State at the Plynteria and that new robes were presented at the Panathenaia.

The perception of the image-divinity relationship was highly varied as well as complex and the problem was compounded by terminology. Pausanias, for example, often uses *agalma* with the divinity's name in the genitive. Such a case is that of the images under two tripods (3, 18, 8). Under the first tripod stood Ἀφροδίτης ἄγαλμα whilst under the second tripod there stood Ἄρτεμις. (divinity's name). W.H.S. Jones<sup>93</sup> translates the latter with an indefinite article though Greek does not have one. The translation thus suggests 'representation' whereas Pausanias simply states the god's name. It appears therefore that in Greek minds two beliefs could be held simultaneously, namely that statues were gods *and* that they were not gods. It is onto this apparent paradox that Gordon (1979: 25) sheds some helpful light -

As a representation, a statue or picture of a god (and of a man, woman or dog) negates fluidity, movement, dissolution. It negates essential aspects of 'aming'. But, as a reproduction, it asserts other aspects of that same 'aming'. It is of the essence of the representation that it denies in order to assert. It is a sort of logical puzzle. But then, so are gods. They are here and not here, seen and invisible, human and not human, just and unjust, ordered and disorderly, powerful and weak. They combine every contrary. They are impossible but actual. As representations, statues and pictures of gods indeed 'represent' them. They are true illusions, pictures of a world we cannot know.

The Greco-Roman world thus exhibits wide variation in perceptions on the functions of images and on the relationship between images and divinities. Underpinning this immense ambiguity and diversity was the fundamental problem of defining 'divinity'. No ancient source provides us with a semantic analysis or consensus of the term *theos* and therefore the dividing-line between divinity and humanity could be ambiguous. Cicero in the 1st century B.C.E. reports the argument of Carneades, a member of the academic school of philosophy in the 2nd century B.C.E.<sup>94</sup> -

If gods exist, are the nymphs also goddesses? If the nymphs are, are the Pans and Satyrs also gods? But they are not gods, therefore the nymphs also are not gods. Yet they possess temples vowed and dedicated to them by the nation. Therefore the other gods who have had temples dedicated to them are not gods either.

Cicero shows that Carneades was attacking the Stoic theology which upheld popular polytheism on the grounds that the multitudes of individual deities were aspects of one cosmic deity. Carneades felt that some deities were clearly divine e.g. Zeus, but others

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<sup>93</sup> W.H.S. Jones, *Pausanias Laconia*, 3, 18, 8 LCL 1966. Similar examples of Pausanias' tendency to do this can be seen in 5.20.2-3; 5.23.1; 5.25.12; 5.26.2; 10.10.1.

<sup>94</sup> Cicero *De Natura Deorum* 3. 43-52 quoted from 43. Translation by H. Rackham. L.C.L., 1933. A protracted discourse is offered here on the complex issue of trying to establish just what constitutes divinity. Many candidates, including Asclepius, Isis and Osiris are put forward as being deities. The interesting point is made that "divine honours are paid to men's virtues, not to their immortality." (46).



were not. *Theos* had no clear boundary markers and this raises issues which would have been of direct relevance to the Corinthian Christians. The boundary line between the divine and the human was not always clear.<sup>95</sup> S.R.F. Price, in a key article, suggests that *theos* was the same sort of predicate as *person*<sup>96</sup> such that the distinction between the two could be problematic at the edges. What for example was the status of the dead, demons, chthonic 'gods', Emperors and heroes? When Antinous in 130 C.E. was drowned in the Nile, Hadrian grieved and had him enrolled among the gods. (Paus. 8, 9, 7-8) Clement of Alexandria (*Exhortation to the Greeks* 4, 48P) notes that Hippo claimed deification on death. The *Wisdom of Solomon* probably written in the first century B.C.E. or early first century C.E. records a father whose child died suddenly. The distraught father made an image of the child and honoured him as a god, passing the rites on to his successors. (14, 12-21). On a more light-hearted note, Plutarch<sup>97</sup> observed "And is not almost any king called an Apollo if he can hum a tune, and a Dionysus if he gets drunk, and a Heracles if he can wrestle. And is he not delighted, and thus led on into all kinds of disgrace by the flattery?" Plutarch (*Obsolescence of Oracles* 415B) shows how Hesiod claimed the possibility of transformation for demi-gods into good divinities and from demigods into heroes, whilst others claimed that the souls of men could become heroes and then demi-gods, and a few of these demi-gods could be purified into gods, a progression almost identical to that found in Torajanese belief today. (See Chapter 2).

Along the divine/human spectrum, there was at least two-way traffic. Some gods were believed to have appeared in disguise as men.<sup>98</sup> Some historical men considered themselves to be divine in some sense.<sup>99</sup> Some public benefactors were honoured with the same sort of cults given to gods. Some men - notably Asclepius and Hercules - were born of a union between mortals and gods but had attained godhood. Some Greeks brought offerings to Hercules as an immortal but another cult was established for him as a dead hero (Herodotus 2:44). Homer, *Odyssey* 11, 601f. distinguishes between Heracles as an *eidolon* in the world of the dead and Heracles himself as an immortal god joining in the feast.

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<sup>95</sup> The influence of the philosophers did little to simplify the issue. Plato's position led to the belief that every person was essentially divine. (See *Timaeus* 41 A-D; *Phaedo* 80-84B; *Phaedrus* 245C-249C.) To some extent the Stoics and Epicureans shared this view while Epicureans felt themselves to be of the same substance as the gods. Orphic tradition paralleled that of the modern Torajanese, namely the view that men were by nature divine and had the potential to re-join the gods after death.

<sup>96</sup> S.R.F. Price "Gods and Emperors: The Greek Language of the Roman Imperial Cult" *JHS* 104 (1984) p.80-1.

<sup>97</sup> Plutarch *Moralia, How to Tell a Flatterer from a Friend* 56 E-F. Translation by F.C. Babbitt LCL, 1927.

<sup>98</sup> Thus, for example, Xerxes (Herodotus 7.56.2); Caesar (Suetonius, *Vita Caes.* 88); Pythagoras (Diogenes Laertius 8.11).

<sup>99</sup> For example, Caligula (Suetonius, *Caligula* 22); Sostratus (Lucian, *Demonax*, 1).

Morton Smith has the problem in a nutshell - "'To honor a man as a god' (σέβειν ὡς θεόν) is ambiguous - since 'as' may mean 'as being' or 'as if'. In Greece it usually meant 'as if', but the other possibility was constantly suggested to the mind."<sup>100</sup> Smith argues that men's notions of the gods, and the gods themselves, were constantly changing and thus complicating the issue. The Greek image produced a wide range of evocations. The divine/human continuum was thoroughly ambiguous. Inevitably there would be no consensus, therefore, on what constituted idolatry or worship. The whole issue was far more complicated than most Biblical scholars have either begun to realise or been willing to admit. If individuals or groups held many valid and justifiable views<sup>101</sup> on images, then there would be divergence in their conceptions of 'idol-food' and 'idolatry' as well. The existence of the 'ABC complex' - ambiguities, boundary problems and conceptual differences - created not simple black and white divisions, but rather, highly complex multi-dimensional grey areas. Compounding the complexity of cultic images and festivals even further, of course, was the natural tendency in Greco-Roman religion toward the essential inclusiveness of pagan divinities. A pagan's approach to one god did not exclude an approach to others. Indeed MacMullen (1981: 88) puts forward the idea of a pyramid of powers, such that exclusive monotheists like Jews and Christians held to the hatred of the greatest power toward all others beneath. He contends - and this in effect is suggested by Dio Chrysostom, *Discourse* 31.11 - that

... Polytheists perceived no split within the pyramid. They could only distinguish the supreme god from others by the amount of power he possessed. If they gave him all - that is, if they adopted monotheism in its radical sense - they must take away power from every other god, thus denying or obliterating everything in the pyramid save the top. To have done so would have involved the destruction of their whole culture. That, it hardly needs to be said, could not come easily.

Little wonder, therefore, that the issue of cultic images and festivals was so sensitive and so explosive for the newly emerging Corinthian Church. It is no less volatile an issue for the Torajanese Church after almost 90 years of Christianity.

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<sup>100</sup> Morton Smith "Prolegomena to a Discussion of Aretologies, Divine Men, the Gospels and Jesus" in *JBL* Vol. 90 (1971), pp.182 and 184. A Greek maxim helps to suggest the way in which human rulers could have been incorporated into Greek tradition and thinking - τῆ θεός; τ[δ] κρατοῦν ἴ βασιλεύ [ς; ισ] ὀθεος "What is a god? To rule with strength. What is a king? Equal to the god/god-like." The scope for ambiguity is again apparent. Our source here is from a second century C.E. papyrus "Fragmente aus der Heidelberger Papyrussammlung" Von. Fr. Bilabel. Inv. 1716 verso In *Philologus* Band LXXX 1924-6 p.339. Guthrie (*The Greeks* 1950: 245) was right when he concluded that "... there is no infallible criterion for distinguishing between the two classes of earth- denizens, heroes and gods."

<sup>101</sup> The sheer diversity was observed in 97 C.E. when Dio Chrysostom presented at Olympia his imaginary conversation with the sculptor Pheidias. Dio notes (*Olympic Discourse: On Man's First Conception of God* Bk. 12 Section 53. Translation by J.W. Cohoon. LCL 1939). that "since in times past because we had no clear knowledge, we formed each his different idea, and each person, according to his capacity and nature, conceived a likeness for every divine manifestation and fashioned such likenesses in his dreams." Dio praises Pheidias' image of Zeus but at the same time identifies a wide range of viewpoint and practice regarding images.

## 4.7 THE PERCEIVED NATURE OF ROMAN IMPERIAL IMAGES

### 4.7.1 PERCEIVED FUNCTIONS OF IMPERIAL IMAGES

Attitudes and perceptions towards imperial images are far from easy to trace in the ancient records, but are nevertheless of fundamental importance in seeking to grasp the dynamics of imperial cult and to assess their role in the issue of the cultic festivals which lay behind 1 Cor.8-10. Once again, evidence from a number of contexts suggests a broad range of perceived function for representations of the Emperor.

At one end of the spectrum, imperial images could evoke a sense of the reality of the supernatural, particularly as media for the manifestation of divine portents. For example, an incident is described by Plutarch, as having occurred following the preparations made by Caesar and the vote to wage war on Cleopatra. The plan was to take away from Antony the authority he had surrendered to a woman. Before war began, one sign, among a number, consisted of the constant oozing of sweat from one of the marble statues of Antony near Alba. Moreover a strong wind blew on the figures of Eumenes and Attalus at Athens "on which the name of Antony had been inscribed, and prostrated them, and them alone out of many."<sup>102</sup> Two, out of a number of occasions, are recorded on which imperial statues shifted direction as a portent of power struggles.<sup>103</sup> In each of these cases, however, we have no evidence which unequivocally proves the divine status of the Emperor or which indicates the actual source of the power. Indeed, interestingly, Livy 40, 59 writing in late first century B.C.E. records images which lay on couches and which turned away from the banquet in disgust and caused the golden dish set before Jupiter to fall off its table. In this case, the images were the gods of Rome and this portent led to the repetition of Games, as a means of making atonement. The material related in the book of Revelation Chapter 13 may reflect the provincial cult of Domitian at Ephesus with its colossal cult statue, if so, providing evidence of the perceived supernatural power of an image. Price (*Rituals* 1984 pp.197-8) argues the feasibility of that cult statue lying behind the text of Revelation "if one accepts the conventional Domitianic date for *Revelation*."

Evidence exists to show how imperial images generated in some of the populace a real measure of fear and respect. Emotions both negative and positive could be expressed within the political function of images. Thus for example when Tiberius was in exile on Rhodes, the citizens of Nemausus pulled down statues of him. (Suet. *Tib.* 13). Conversely when Nero was persuaded by popular opinion to recall Octavia as his wife, crowds threw down statues of Poppaea, Nero's then current lover, and carried images of Octavia on

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<sup>102</sup> Plutarch, *Lives Antony*, 60, 2. Translation by B. Perrin, LCL, 1920.

<sup>103</sup> Suetonius writing in the late first century C.E. refers to a statue of Deified Julius (Suetonius, *The Lives of the Caesars* Vespasian 5, 7) whilst Plutarch notes the events surrounding the statue of Caius Caesar. (*Lives: Otho*, 4, 4-5).

their shoulders with great rejoicing. (Tacitus *Ann.* 14.61). Another aspect of this perspective emerges from a study of images in their function as places of refuge. That the Emperor held a prominent and powerful command over some people can be seen from the late second century C.E. work of Philostratus in which he recounts the arrival of the first century C.E. mystic Apollonius of Tyana at Aspendus in Pamphylia, where rich corn merchants had withheld supplies during a famine. An angry crowd threatened to burn alive the apparently innocent governor "although he was clinging to the statues of the Emperor, [Tiberius] which were more dreaded at that time and more inviolable than the Zeus in Olympia."<sup>104</sup> On one occasion, indeed, a master had been charged and found guilty of impiety, simply on the grounds that he had hit his slave "when he had on his person a drachma coined with the image of Tiberius." (ibid.) Study of other evidence indicates both the significance of imperial images and the sanctions imposed if such images were violated.<sup>105</sup> Such images tended to be permanent, unless an emperor died in official disgrace.<sup>106</sup> It is also true that images could exercise a real political function as for example when Dio Cassius claimed (43.45.3f.) that it was the sight of the statue of L. Iunius Brutus and of Caesar on the Capitol that prompted M. Brutus to assassinate Caesar.

Abundant evidence exists for the attributing of divine honours to the emperor. After the apotheosis of Augustus, for example, his gold εἰκόν was put onto a couch in the temple of Mars Ultor and there it received the same cultus that was later given to the ἄγαλμα of Augustus in his own temple after its completion. (Dio 59, 4, 4). Drusilla, born around 16 C.E. and sister of Gaius, died in 38 C.E. and was deified, sharing the temple of Venus at Rome and having her ἄγαλμα erected inside that temple. (Dio 59, 11, 2) Oriental princes worshipped the likeness of an emperor among the standards, Artabanus, for example, being forced θῦσαι ταῖς εἰκόσι of Augustus and Gaius, in which situation Augustus was *divus*. (Dio 59, 27, 3 and Suet. *Calig.* 14, 3)<sup>107</sup> A number of Emperors are known to have encouraged images of themselves. Gaius "ordered temples to be erected and sacrifices to be offered to himself as to a god,"<sup>108</sup> though this, we repeat, was regarded as exceptional.

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<sup>104</sup> Philostratus *The Life of Apollonius of Tyana* Bk. 1 Ch. 15. English Translation by F.C. Conybeare LCL 1969.

<sup>105</sup> See for example Pliny *Letters*, 10.70; Gaius [2nd century C.E.] *Institutes* Pt.1 Bk.1, 53; Tacitus *Annals* 3, 63; Dio Chrysostom *Or.* 31, 43 and 105-8 (the latter indicates sanctions, as does Suet. *Tiberius*, 58); Ulpian in *Digest* 21, 1, 19, 1.

<sup>106</sup> As, for example, in Tacitus *Hist.* 3, 7; Pliny, *Panegyricus* 52; Suet. *Claudius* 11, *Nero* 49, *Domitian* 23.

<sup>107</sup> See also Tac. *Ann.* 4, 2, 4; 12, 17, 3; 15, 29, 3-6.

<sup>108</sup> Dio *Roman History* Bk.59, 4, 4. (Translated by E. Cary LCL, 1968.) Other examples of this tendency included Nero (Tac. *Ann.* 14, 12, 4); Domitian (Suet. *Dom.* 13; Dio *Epitome* of Bk. 67, 8.1 & 12.2; Dio, *Epitome* of Bk. 68, 1, 1); Caracalla (Dio 79, 18, 1). Dio Cassius wrote this history at the close of the 2nd century C.E.

By contrast, however, there were those emperors who sought to dissociate themselves from divine honours. Augustus in particular sought to show respect to the gods and it is recorded that he ordered the melting down of silver statues erected in his honour and the making in their place of golden tripods to Apollo of the Palatine. (Suet. *Aug.* 52). Admittedly, however, the focus of this policy was in Rome itself. We know for example that Ovid (*Ponto* 2, 8) attributed deity to the likenesses of Augustus, Livia and Tiberius sent to him by Cotta Maximus and kept in his house. Tiberius himself refused divine honour and worship in Rome and Italy, and even Nero, in the early part of his rule, forbade the offering to himself of statues in solid silver or gold. (Tac. *Ann.* 13, 10, 1F.). Vespasian almost certainly did not permit statues to himself. Tiberius indeed allowed statues and likenesses to himself only on condition that they were not placed among the *simulacra* of the gods but among the *ornamenta* of the shrines. (Suet. *Tib.* 26). This evidence does of course relate to Rome, not the Greek East. Such an effort to detach imperial images from connotations of divinity is further exemplified by Maecenas,<sup>109</sup> a patron of letters from an aristocratic Etruscan background, who portrayed a metaphorical view of images when he was made to say to Augustus -

And you should never permit gold or silver images [εἰκόνας] of yourself to be made, for they are not only costly but also invite destruction and last only a brief time; but rather by your benefactions fashion other images in the hearts of your people, images which will never tarnish or perish... Hence, if you are upright as a man, and honourable as a ruler, the whole earth will be your hallowed precinct, all cities your temples, and all men your statues [ἀγάλματα], since within their thoughts you will ever be enshrined and glorified.

## 4.7.2 THE PERCEIVED RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN IMAGE, EMPEROR AND DIVINITY

### 4.7.2.1 The Problem Stated

On the basis of the wide spectrum of positions on the function of imperial images, we continue our argument that such a situation was founded upon, and complicated by, the existence of ambiguities, boundary definition difficulties and conceptual differences. One of the underlying complexities in all of this was the fact that although Corinth had a rich Hellenistic past, it was also a well established and significant Roman colony by the mid first century C.E. In his work on Asia Minor, Price makes a statement which we shall employ as a starting point for our investigation (*Rituals* 1984: 206).

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<sup>109</sup> Dio *Roman History* Bk. 52, 35, 3-6. Translated by E. Cary. LCL, 1968.

The Greeks with their own traditions and institutions could not incorporate the charisma of the centre simply by taking over Roman practices; they had to relate the emperor to their own central values, that is, to the gods. In this enterprise the imperial image was of particular significance. The image, which emanated from, and represented, the centre, was omnipresent and widely venerated. By it, above all, the charisma of the central power was diffused, transformed and incorporated into the Greek world.

The situation at first sight might seem to be relatively simple. During the imperial period, there was a growing cult of the deceased emperor which has been viewed as one way of affirming loyalty to the Principate from Caesar's time onwards.<sup>110</sup> According to Bowersock "... no thinking man ever believed in the divinity of a living emperor" and although he could grasp the idea of deification of dead Emperors, nevertheless such 'deities' were not in his eyes 'the gods'.<sup>111</sup> Those who did feel real religious belief in the Emperor's divinity, argues Scott, were "... the more ignorant lower classes..."<sup>112</sup> It is this sort of division which caused J. Chow (1992: 154) to put forward, albeit tentatively and cautiously, his idea that the elitist sceptical view was that the emperor was human, whilst the view of the common people was that the emperor was hard to distinguish from a god. He then suggests, with equal caution, that this division might correspond to the so-called 'strong' and weak parties in Corinth. Over-categorization and over-simplification are permanent dangers attending the task of biblical scholarship. Nevertheless it is important to remember that although we have noted differences between Greek and Roman conceptions of images and although we have seen the emergence of many ambiguities, nevertheless some basic patterns of consistency did exist. The available evidence must be allowed to speak for itself, as we consider now some perspectives from ancient literature.

#### 4.7.2.2 The Ambiguous and Complex Status of the Emperors

We have made reference in the previous section to the fact that some Emperors encouraged image and cult to their own selves even during their own lifetime. We now consider a range of responses to such ritual activity, beginning with attitudes of cynicism and comedy concerning divinity. When Antony entered Ephesus, he was hailed as Dionysus, giver of Joy and Beneficence, but according to Plutarch (Antony 24, 3-4), most people simply viewed Antony as a fierce, vicious and unfair villain. Gaius, as we have observed, dressed up as various divinities and on one occasion, in the guise of Jupiter, he was spotted by a certain Gaul who promptly laughed, and in response to a challenge from Gaius, pronounced that Gaius looked like *παραλήρημα* - "an absurdity". (Dio. 59. 26.

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<sup>110</sup> See A.D. Clarke and B.W. Winter Ed. *One God, One Lord in a World of Religious Pluralism*. Tyndale House, Cambridge. 1991 p.126.

<sup>111</sup> G.W. Bowersock "Greek Intellectuals and the Imperial Cult in the Second Century A.D." in *Le Culte des Souverains dans L'Empire Romain*, Fondation Hardt, Genève 1973: 206.

<sup>112</sup> K. Scott "Humour at the Expense of the Imperial Cult" *Classical Philology* Vol.27 (1932) p.328.

8-9). Gaius claimed one day to be talking to the moon-goddess and asked Vitellius if he could see her. Vitellius' humorous reply was to the effect that only the gods, like Gaius, could actually see other gods. (Dio. 59. 26. 5). On occasion, even emperors themselves could ridicule the attribution of divinity. Claudius was deified after death but his actual dying was attributed to eating poisoned mushrooms arranged by Agrippina and Nero. At a subsequent banquet Nero made reference to the mushrooms on the table in response to the expressed view that mushrooms were the 'food of the gods'. His comments recalled that his father had been made a god by eating a mushroom. (Dio. *Epit.* 61.35.4). Seneca, in the 1st century C.E., wrote a satire on the *Apocolocyntosis* ('Pumpkinification') of the dead Claudius. Seneca makes fun of the oath taken by the keeper of the Appian Way claiming that he had seen a *divus* or *diva* going up to heaven. The gods discuss the deification of Claudius and deified Augustus is made to say that the deification of Claudius destroys the credibility of all gods. Claudius actually had banished Seneca to Corsica.

The very fact that some poked fun at emperor worship does not of course rule out the likelihood that some of these very people were immersed in such veneration as an expression of loyalty. Nor can we say that all educated people dismissed emperor worship. Whilst it seems that the common people believed Vespasian to have had healing powers, (Tac. *Hist.* 4.81) the educated in society, such as P. Cornelius Tacitus and Tacitus himself, seem also to have shared such a view. (Tac. *Hist.* 1.10.7). Whatever their real beliefs, moreover, it was precisely prominent benefactors and those seeking priesthoods in the Greek provinces who had most to gain by allegiance to, and support of, imperial cult. We note in passing that amongst the *Greek* intellectuals, according to Bowersock, there appears broadly to have been a stated measure of distinction between the emperor and the god. Pliny the younger, in the opening years of the second century C.E., expressed concern to Trajan about the spread of Christianity and designed a test for Christians by placing the image of Trajan alongside statues of gods. If a Christian was ready to sacrifice to the living emperor, this constituted evidence that the person was not subversive. Pliny distinguished between statues of gods (*deorum simulacra*) and Trajan's *imago*, and his policy was to dismiss the case against any supposed Christian who would turn against Christ and sacrifice to images of gods. Thus Pliny's distinction between gods and Emperor suggests that he did not equate the two categories (Pliny, Letters 10.96). Second century C.E. writers in general seem to take the line that Emperors could acquire high degrees of virtue and in such a sense might be considered 'divine' i.e. more than human, yet they still remained human in terms of mortality. This distinction between human and divine is evidenced, for example, in the writing of Aristides following the earthquake of 178 C.E. He appeals to Marcus and Commodus in the plea for help which makes a distinction between 'gods' and 'rulers'. (*Or.* 5). Indeed in *Oration* 26, 32 Aristides mentions two prayers, one to the gods on the ruler's behalf and one, concerning

his own business, to the ruler himself. Aristides elsewhere<sup>113</sup> speaks about the need for people to follow the example of the Emperors in showing concord "For the sake of the gods themselves and our divine Emperors..." Some could hold together gods *and* Emperors in their minds at one and the same time.

It does appear in Roman tradition that at least theoretically, an emperor only gained divine status after death and only if considered worthy of the honour. It has emerged, however that the reality across the ancient world was far more complicated than that. We have noted previously that the empress Livia was deified<sup>114</sup> whilst alive (possibly in 23 C.E.) well before her death in 29 C.E. and her official deification in 42 C.E. A senate decision decreed Caesar to be a god and commanded the erection of a temple to him and his *Clementia*. By the same decree [Dio. 44. 6. 4] it was agreed that his chair and crown be carried into theatres in the same way as those of the gods, yet when they bestowed upon him a quadrennial festival, it was ὡς ἥρωι - 'as to a hero'.<sup>115</sup> Appian records, in the early 2nd century C.E. that many temples were decreed to Caesar "as to a god",<sup>116</sup> Suetonius [*Caesar* 85] records a crowd demanding sacrifices to Caesar at an altar and we know that an inscription in Corinth [Kent No.50] read "[sacred] to the deified Julius Caesar". Once again, however, scope for ambiguity was always on hand because sacrifices and libations could be offered to the living Emperor [Dio.51.19.7] through the cult of his *Genius* - the attendant spirit of the person. Taylor has argued that the offering of sacrifices to the *Genius* before his statues functioned "as a symbol of loyalty to the rule."<sup>117</sup> This of course raises the issue of whether the function of the image and sacrifice was 'religious' or 'political'. Taylor offers three other comments which for our purposes in 1 Cor.8-10 open up even further ambiguity, firstly, that although in the East, official documents tried to avoid calling the emperor *theos*, nevertheless there was "no diminution in the worship that was accorded to him" (1931: 168); secondly that there is only one

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<sup>113</sup> P. Aelius Aristides: *The Complete Works* Vol.II Oration 23, 79 "Concerning Concord". Charles A. Behr. Brill 1981. Aristides, writing in the later second century C.E. also wrote *Panegyric in Cyzicus concerning the temple*. In *Or.* 27, 22 he records the dedication of a temple of the imperial cult which bore an inscription to the god Hadrian yet there is no mention by Aristides of the divinity of the emperor. Rather he describes the temple as a thank-offering 'to the gods' - τοῖς θεοῖς. This exemplifies therefore a measure of distinction between god and Emperor.

<sup>114</sup> See *Kent Inscriptions* No. 153 ["the divine Julia Augusta"]. This is confirmed also in B.D. Meritt *Greek Inscriptions* Vol.8 Part 1 No.19 ASCSA, 1931.

<sup>115</sup> Plutarch *Caesar* 57 claims that these decrees, arranged in the same year that Caesar refounded Corinth (44 B.C.E.), went far beyond that which Caesar himself had felt reasonable.

<sup>116</sup> Appian *Roman History: The Civil Wars* Bk II Ch. 16, 106. Translation by H. White, LCL, 1913.

<sup>117</sup> L.R. Taylor *The Divinity of the Roman Emperor*. American Philological Assoc. 1931 p.241. We note at this stage the results of research carried out by T. Paige *Spirit at Corinth: The Corinthian Concept of Spirit and Paul's Response as seen in 1 Corinthians*. Unpublished PhD Univ. of Sheffield 1993 p.264-5. Paige observes that *Genius* was commonly translated into Greek as *daimon* and vice versa e.g. *P. Oxy* 1021.8-12 applies the term *daimon* to Nero in 58 C.E. Some further implications of this research will be considered in our Ch.6 Exegesis.



literary parallel from Augustus' reign for the attachment of the word *deus* to the name of an emperor [Caesar]. [Propertius 3, 4, 1 around 22 B.C.E.] (1931: 213); and thirdly that the term *divus* was regularly attached to the emperor's name to show divinity but gradually came to mean 'man made into god'. (1931: 241). In short, 'divinity' was ambiguous and complex and sometimes *deliberately* so, as in the case of the Capitoline representation of Commodus as Hercules with its intention of conveying to the public the notions of his bravery, strength and divinity. (Dio. 72.17.4). Likewise Octavian juxtaposed a statue of his doctor Antonius Musa next to a statue of Asclepius (Seut. Aug. 59), thereby presumably adding considerably to the prestige and reputation of his doctor.

## 4.8 SOME COMPLICATED CONSEQUENCES FOR CHRISTIANS

### 4.8.1 THE PROBLEM OF GREEK AND LATIN TERMS

The whole issue of the divinity or humanity of the Emperor is indeed a complex one but it is nevertheless a crucial one. People's perceptions of imperial cult - whether it involved worship of a divinity or honouring of a living or departed human being or a combination thereof - would understandably help to shape their views concerning their attendance at, and/or participation in, cultic festivals.

The crux of the issue of terminology could well have revolved around the Greek tendency to call the living emperor both *theou huios* ('son of God') and also *theos* ('god'). At Rome, by contrast, a deceased but deified Emperor was termed a *divus*, not a *deus*. In Greek, however, there was no equivalent pair of terms, so *theos* had to be used to include *both* Latin terms and *theos* tended to be used for *divus* on inscriptions. Thus *theos*, when used of a living emperor, cannot be viewed as a translation of *divus* and consequently this creates problems if we maintain that *theou huios* is a translation of *divi filius*, though perhaps in any case it is too simple to seek a direct "translation". Of course in all of this, and as we have noted already, we are confronted by the absence of any serious and detailed semantic survey of *theos* itself. The term *theos* was attributed to the Emperor in a number of ways by the Greeks. Sometimes it was used directly to refer to the Emperor as in the case of the building of imperial temples and holding of imperial feasts by a local benefactor who twice states that he showed piety towards 'the god' i.e. Augustus.<sup>118</sup> Sometimes the inscriptions below imperial statues in the sanctuaries of the gods called the emperor *theos*. For example in the case of the statue of Livia (14 C.E.) an inscription referred to "Julia Augusta Hestia, new Demeter."<sup>119</sup> However similar designations could also be found in secular contexts such as the theatre of Demetrias<sup>120</sup> (71-81 C.E.). In

<sup>118</sup> See IG XII Supplement No.124 (Eresus) Pub. 1939. See lines 23 and 26.

<sup>119</sup> *Die Inschriften Von Lampsakos* No. 11 Statue der Livia. Rudolf Habelt Verlag GMBH. Bonn 1978.

<sup>120</sup> See SEG 23, 450, states - Μάγνητες θεὸν θεοῦ υἱὸν Τίτον Καίσαρα νέον Ἀπ[ί]λλωνα εὐεργέτην.

addition priesthoods sometimes gave the emperor's name only but on other occasions *theos* or some other divine name was added. This seemingly, and indeed actual, variation in use of *theos* by Greeks is explained by Price ("Gods and Emperors" 1984: 82) on the basis that "... there were no institutional procedures nor established criteria controlling the predication of *theos* of the emperor. When a city came to pass a decree it was not concerned to debate the status of *theos* but to establish a cult of the emperor."

This situation is in sharp contrast to that which prevailed in Rome where the emperor was not a *deus* in his lifetime and could only be made a *divus* after his death. There was thus a clear distinction in Rome between *deus* and *divus*. A *divus* was not equivalent to a *deus* or 'god'. The Greeks however had no category comparable to *divus*, so that if a Greek, as we pointed out earlier, used *theou huios* as an equivalent of *divi filius*, then the actual meaning would be different since each belonged to a different thought system. The term *divus* was reserved for deceased, deified emperors, so if Greeks wanted to refer to a living emperor, they could use the term *theou huios theos* ('a god, son of god').<sup>121</sup> The crux of the issue has been helpfully expressed in the work of S.R.F. Price ("Gods and Emperors" 1984: 8) -

Of course, if a Greek wanted to say *divi filius* he would say *theou huios*, but functional equivalence is not the same thing as identity of meaning... Nor can the minds or intentions of the Greek speakers serve as a criterion of meaning independent of the two languages. Intentions may indeed be independent of languages, but they do not give meaning to words... We should therefore not imagine that the Greeks were really thinking in Latin, but had the misfortune to express themselves in Greek. The predication of *theos* of the emperor, though it is in certain contexts equivalent to *divus* in Latin, has meaning in the context of general Greek usage of *theos*.<sup>122</sup>

Thus when Paul used the term *theos* in 1 Cor.8:4-6 alongside *kyrios*, in the context of Imperial Cult, it is very likely that a range of conceptions and understandings would have been generated, some divine, some human, some intermediate. Ambiguity, boundary issues and conceptual differences would, we contend, have been very real.<sup>123</sup> The scope for complexity presumably would have been at its greatest in cities away from Rome where the Hellenic and the Roman merged e.g. Corinth. Both pagan Greeks and Christians used *theos* as a predicative term, and as Price notes ("Gods and Emperors"

<sup>121</sup> One example of this is I. Ilion 81 (*IGR* iv 201) which describes a statue erected of Emperor Caesar 'son of *theos*, *theos Sebastos*'. The comment is made that he performed great deeds for all people.

<sup>122</sup> Price, "Gods and Emperors" 1984: 87 goes on to show how terms such as *epiphanes* ('manifest'), *athanatos* ('deathless') and *eusebeia* ('loyalty') could and were applied both to gods and to emperors.

<sup>123</sup> Space forbids any detailed consideration of oaths, praises and prayers to the Emperor. Ambiguity once again rears its head in the involvement of the divine and the human, the gods and the Emperors, and it is in this sort of area especially that scholars face the danger of trying to define 'true religion' on the basis of Western or Christian presuppositions and assumptions.

1984: 94), Greek theologians of the early Church predicated *theos* of humans who were brought near to God, both in this life and in the next. In Greek religion the gods were represented in images in the likeness of people yet at the same time they were more than people. The emperor and his image were seen by some as powerful, by some as divine, by some as god-like and by some as dependent on the gods. Thus although the use of the predicate *theos* brought the emperor within the orbit of traditional Greek religion, nevertheless as Price puts it, ("Gods and Emperors" 1984: 94) "He [the Emperor] was located in an ambivalent position, higher than mortals but not fully the equal of the gods... This clearly expresses the ambivalence of the imperial cult."

#### 4.8.2 THE PROBLEM OF THE PLURALITY OF STATUES

The holding of festivals, perhaps simultaneously, such as the Caesarea and Isthmia at Corinth and the physically adjacent locations of imperial and other statues in a wide range of situations undoubtedly brought the emperors and the gods into close relationship. Such a juxtaposition must have compounded the complexity already generated by terminological ambiguity. For example, an inscription<sup>124</sup> from Lapethos in Cyprus states that Adrastos, son of Adrastos, a priest of the temple of the Imperial Cult and a *gymnasiarch*, set up the Cult of Tiberius by erecting a statue of the divine emperor in the gymnasium. Tiberius is referred to as *theos* and in this gymnasium he was located among the traditional gods worshipped there.<sup>125</sup> In the Izmir Archaeological Museum there stands a statue of Flavius Damianus, son of the sophist Vedius and priest of the Imperial Cult, found in the East Bath - Gymnasium in Ephesus. This priest is displayed in a full toga and wearing a wreath crown with twelve small busts representing the twelve traditional gods. The thirteenth element in this crown, however, represents the ruling emperor as a *divus*. In some sense therefore, albeit somewhat allusively, the emperor was represented alongside the traditional gods.<sup>126</sup> Statilii of Epidaurus and Argos were prominent in League politics in the first century C.E. and we know that between 35 and 44

<sup>124</sup> *OGIS* ed. W. Dittenberger Vol. II 1905 No. 583, Lines 1 and 9-11.

<sup>125</sup> In the third century B.C.E. a gold statue of the Seleucid, Antiochus I Soter, referring to him as 'Benefactor' and 'Saviour', was set up in the temple of Athena at Ilium. (*OGIS* No. 219). Similarly in 197 B.C.E. the Sicyonians erected a golden statue of Attalus I in their market place immediately adjacent to the statue of divine Apollo. At the other end of the time spectrum, but well outside the period that directly interests us, the Epitaphios of Libanius on Julian (XVIII, 304 - 4th century C.E.) shows that many cities located images of Julian next to those of gods. Libanius attributes divine power to him.

<sup>126</sup> This statue and its accompanying inscription point to a date in the time of Septimius Severus, Roman emperor in the late second century C.E. Details can be seen in J. Inan and E. Rosenbaum *Roman and Early Byzantine Portrait Sculpture in Asia Minor* OUP 1966 No. 151 Pl. 83,4 and 87,1-2. G.M.A. Hanfmann's comment may well have some relevance for first century C.E. Corinth, with regard to the political significance of images - "Such then was the ideal of Asia Minor during the Roman peace; a man of substance and staus, a philosophic citizen in the classical polis tradition, yet also a loyal Roman citizen, who piously combined the cult of the traditional twelve gods with the Thirteenth God, the *praesens divus*, 'the ruling emperor'." See *From Croesus to Constantine* Ann Arbor 1975 p.71 Figs. 149 and 150 a, b.

C.E., T. Statilius Lamprias II and his son Timocrates arranged for the erection of statues of the Roman governor and his son at the Asclepium<sup>127</sup> at Epidauros 'on behalf of the Achaeans'.

Ambiguity of terminology, combined with plurality of statues, would have formed fertile ground for ambiguity's logical partner and accompaniment, namely argument. Ambiguity generates diverse viewpoints and such was the case, we have argued, regarding the interpretation of images. We have considered ambiguity and conceptual problems with respect to images, and we now turn briefly to the third ingredient which compounded the complexity, namely the issue of the delimitation of the boundaries of worship and the crucial issue, with regard to 1 Cor.8-10, of whether imperial cult was viewed as worship of a divinity or honouring of a living or departed human being or as a combination/elements of both.

#### 4.8.3 THE PROBLEM OF THE WORSHIP/HOMAGE BOUNDARY

The claim has been made by S. Mitchell, though not with specific reference to Corinth, that the obstacle which threatened the perseverance of new adherents to Christianity was the "public worship of the emperors", in the form of "the overwhelming pressure to conform, impressed by the institutions of his city and the activities of his neighbours."<sup>128</sup> What actually constituted 'worship' is, however, far from easy to pinpoint or define, and especially so when we remind ourselves that in the sphere of ancient religion what counted primarily were acts, rather than precisely formulated thoughts, traditional ritual procedures rather than 'doctrinal beliefs'. Precise distinctions between reality on the one hand and representation on the other, appear often to be more the product of the modern Western, rather than the ancient Eastern, mind. As regards the issue of boundaries between worship, honour, homage, veneration and respect, therefore, we once again find ourselves in that territory called ambiguity. K. Hopkins reflects this when he argues that statues and portraits of emperors assisted in maintaining a sense of the living presence of the emperors. Thus he reasons that these statues "were not necessarily objects of worship, especially as worship is commonly understood in our culture; rather the emperor's statues and portraits were objects of homage or respect, symbols of the emperor's legitimate authority."<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> This inscription (*IG IV<sup>2</sup> 665*) is published in W. Peek, *Inschriften aus dem Asklepieion von Epidauros* No.289, 125-6 Akademie-Verlag-Berlin. 1969.

<sup>128</sup> S. Mitchell *Anatolia: Land, Men and Gods in Asia Minor* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993 II, 10.

<sup>129</sup> Keith Hopkins *Conquerors and Slaves: Sociological Studies in Roman History*. Vol. 1 Cambridge Univ. Press 1978 p.223. A.P. Gregory has produced a very recent and significant study in which he shows the potency of imperial images in Late Republic and Early Empire in producing, expressing and manipulating political power. This includes consideration not only of the élite but of the common people and his conclusion is that "there was ambiguity in the Roman attitudes to the use of images and representation." See "Powerful Images: Responses to portraits and the political use of images in Rome." *J. Rom. Arch.* 7 (94) 80-99, esp. p.98.

This line of thought is taken a stage further by Nock who is convinced that in spite of all the dedications and acts of devotion to deified rulers, nevertheless these are all "of the nature of homage and not of worship in the full sense, for worship implies the expectation of blessing to be mediated in a supernatural way."<sup>130</sup> Nock makes a fundamental distinction. On the one hand he sees dedications, whether to rulers or to rulers associated with deity or to cities.<sup>131</sup> On the other hand dedications or acts of piety 'in accordance with a vow' or 'after deliverance' imply the seeking, receipt and acknowledgement of supernatural aid. Nock contends that ruler worship began as an expression of gratitude to benefactors and become an expression of homage and loyalty. He attacks the idea of the emperor's true divinity, believing rather that the dead emperor entered a Hall of Fame, not Olympus, ("Deification" 1957: 121) and that this was a matter of status and Senate decision. He then argues that the idea of deification in any case received widespread ridicule and criticism. Price, on the contrary, opposes such a position, arguing that people often ridiculed that which they actually took seriously. Nock appears unhappy to allow any of *his own* understandings of divine status and 'religious worship' to be applied to the realm of Roman Emperors.<sup>132</sup>

In short, ancient evidence suggests that homage of Emperors and worship of gods actually could co-exist, even if such a relationship might seem contradictory to the modern Western scholar - or perhaps to the Jewish Paul. Indeed the Imperial Cult seems to defy any attempt to pigeon-hole it. We need to let the ancients be ancients and beware of imposing our own modern thought forms and classificatory systems onto the ancient world. The evidence, we contend, supports Chow's tentative suggestion that "to an ordinary Greek the line between a deified man and divine or, in this case, between the emperor and a god, was often not clear." (1992: 153) Some would have viewed the Emperor as divine, some as human, some as intermediate and some as simply

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<sup>130</sup> A.D. Nock In *Cambridge Ancient History* Vol. 10 Ch.15 Cambridge Univ. Press 1952 p.481. One scholar who remarks on the sheer inaccuracy of Christians who accuse pagans of *worshipping* sticks and stones is W.R. Halliday *The Pagan Background of Early Christianity* Hodder and Stoughton, 1925 p.6.

<sup>131</sup> A.D. Nock "Deification and Julian" In *JRS* Vol.47, Parts 1 and 2. (1957) p.115.

<sup>132</sup> G.W. Bowersock appears to share Nock's view that many writers made fun of imperial apotheosis, but Price wisely argues that "... jokes are made precisely about those things that matter most." (*Rituals* 1984: 115).

ambiguous.<sup>133</sup> Some would have felt that in imperial festivals they were worshipping, others honouring, others expressing loyalty, some not sure what they were doing and others not even giving a thought to what they were doing. Moreover, the variation was compounded in religious systems which possessed no official creed and no overall authority to control or oversee belief. Inevitably individuals would be free to place whatever interpretations they liked on cultic artefacts and rituals. Those Corinthians who did give thought to what was happening in cultic practices would have differed widely in their concepts of the nature and function of images. The concepts which Paul carried, along with his 'credal' and 'authoritarian' approaches may well have added to the confusion of the Corinthians in their transition to Christian belief and practice. Thus the ambivalence of both imperial and Greek images triggered a wide spectrum of interpretation and response, both of which were then further complicated by the perceived nature and meaning of the food which participants offered and consumed at festivals. It is to this latter issue that we now turn our attention before we deal in depth and in detail with matters of exegesis and interpretation in 1 Cor.8-10 itself.

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<sup>133</sup> The comment of J.W.H.G. Liebeschuetz *Continuity and Change in Roman Religion* Oxford: Clarendon Press 1979 p.65 is highly pertinent to the issues underlying 1 Cor.8-10 - "But surely as long as the 'worshippers' were aware that they were not placating an immortal being or one capable of miraculous intervention at a distance, their act was not fully religious." Thus whilst MacMullen (*Paganism* 1981: 85) may have a point in suggesting that no-one really supposed that the worship of a ruler constituted worship of a supreme monotheistic deity, nevertheless the complexity of the perceived nature of images led to confusion over the nature of idolatry itself. As F.C. Grant has suggested - and this helps to highlight the predicament of Corinthian Christians - "... the emperor cult was anything but simple old-fashioned idolatry. It carried with it the highest values in human culture: peace, law, order, stability, progress in the arts and in learning, public welfare, prosperity and wealth, the health and the safety of the bodies and the minds of men - of all men everywhere throughout the civilized world." (F.C. Grant Ed. *Ancient Roman Religion* 1957 p.XIV Intro.)

## CHAPTER FIVE

# THE FORM AND PERCEIVED FUNCTION OF FOOD IN GRECO-ROMAN CULTIC CONTEXTS

### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

The great complexity of the issue of image evocations in the ancient world has become apparent and has been seen to be rooted in the existence, both at terminological and at ground levels, of ambiguity, boundary definition difficulties and conceptual differences regarding divinity and humanity. This chapter will argue that the wide range of individual perspectives and interpretations generated by these underlying causes extends also into the areas of the sacrificial offerings and communal meals which characterized cultic festivals. We shall continue to argue that the whole issue was far more complex than scholars have been able or willing to admit. Obviously the dynamics of the Torajanese case-study were relatively accessible for investigation through living interviewees. Our task of searching the ancient world is clearly much harder, but we shall nevertheless use the basic format of that Torajanese Questionnaire to direct our questions to the Greco-Roman and Oriental material available to us.

The study will fall into two major sections which we shall seek to treat separately, though inevitably the very nature of the subject matter will necessitate a measure of overlap and boundary-breaking. The questions which will especially occupy our attention are as follows:

#### 1. THE OFFERING OF SACRIFICES

- a) How much of the food was sacrificed, how much was eaten and was the latter considered 'sacrificial' or not?
- b) Did everyone offer sacrifice or was that the responsibility of a few?
- c) To whom were the sacrificial offerings directed?
- d) Was the purpose/function of the sacrifice 'religious' or otherwise?

#### 2. THE COMMUNAL EATING OF MEALS

- a) What factors determined the division of food after the sacrifice?
- b) Was the sacrificial portion consumed during communal meals?
- c) What sort of people partook of communal meals?
- d) What was the perceived purpose and function of such meals?

Though widely scattered in both time and space, references to Greco-Roman sacrifices and communal meals are very considerable in number and selection will consequently be inevitable. Only a limited number of references will be dealt with in detail but other researched material will be recorded. In particular we shall continue our attempt to trace evidence which will shed some light, albeit in a limited way, on the issue of ancient perspectives on cultic festivals. This is a challenging and complex subject, for biblical

scholars in many respects are like modern missionaries and anthropologists in Indonesia - foreigners, strangers and outsiders to the very society they are trying to understand and explain.

As with our methodology in Chapter 4, we shall start, not at the visible ground level evidence of sacrifices and meals in the ancient world, but with the evidence of the biblical text and terminology used by Paul in 1 Cor.8-10. In particular we shall seek to investigate how the key terms εἰδωλόθυτος (1 Cor.8: 1, 4, 7, 10; 10:19) and ἱερόθυτος (1 Cor.10:28) might have been variously used and understood in different ancient contexts, for it was this sacrificial food that lay at the centre of the controversy in the Corinthian Church.

## 5.2 THE GREEK ROOT: ἱερόθυτ : A PRE-CHRISTIAN TERM

The term *hierothutos*, derived from *hieros* and *thutos*, refers to that which has been consecrated or sacrificed to deity. When checked in a TLG Computer Search across the entire spectrum of Greek literature, including later ecclesiastical writers, it was discovered that the term occurs only 22 times in total. This word *hierothuton*, which interestingly does not occur in Josephus or in Philo, was examined in detail in a little over half of its occurrences.

### 5.2.1 PRE-PAULINE OCCURRENCES

Fifth century B.C.E. Pindar used the masculine term τὸν ἱερόθυτον θάνατον - 'the holy sacrifice of death'<sup>1</sup> - in a cultic yet metaphorical sense, to signify the giving up of one's life in war. Aristophanes, writing also in that same century, used the word as an adjective to describe the smoke of sacrificial offerings<sup>2</sup> - masculine adjective ἱερόθυτον καπνόν.

Writing towards the end of the 4th century B.C.E., Aristotle<sup>3</sup> records the act by which the citizens of Dionysius of Syracuse offered their animals as sacrifices - ἱερόθυτα - as an expression of anger at Dionysius' repeated deceiving of them. A work widely considered to be Pseudo-Aristotle<sup>4</sup> describes a market place in Elis in which kites

<sup>1</sup> Pindar, *Odes including The Principal Fragments*. Fragment 78. Tr. Sir John Sandys. LCL 1968. For a similar usage, see Plutarch *Moralia, Sayings of Kings and Commanders* 192C8.

<sup>2</sup> Aristophanes, *The Birds* 1265 Tr. Benjamin Rogers. LCL 1968.

<sup>3</sup> Aristotle *The Oeconomica* Bk. II, 1349b., Lines 11-14, Tr. G.C. Armstrong. LCL 1935. Bk II of this work is largely an independent work of anecdotes showing how rulers used various means to maintain and add to their finances. It may well have been written in the latter half of the 3rd Century B.C.E.

<sup>4</sup> Ps. Aristotle *On Marvellous Things Heard* 842a Lines 34-35 and 842b Line 1 in Aristotle *Minor Works*. Tr. W.S. Hett. LCL 1936. The date of this work is unknown but Hett feels it probably came from the Peripatetic School which passed from Aristotle's hands into those of Theophrastus in 322 B.C.E. The date of composition of this work is probably in the period 322-269 B.C.E.



snatch pieces of meat from those carrying them, yet they do not touch those which are offerings to the gods - τῶν δὲ ἱεροθύτων οὐχ ἄπτονται. Thus we note that both sacrificial *and* non-sacrificial meat were present in the market.

In the second century B.C.E. an inscription<sup>5</sup> dated in 183 B.C.E. honours the hero Philopoemen and uses the term ἱερόθυτον in the context of the sacrificial offering of sheep. A Mystery Inscription from Andania dated 91 B.C.E. refers to the actual skin of a sacrificial animal.<sup>6</sup>

## 5.2.2 FIRST AND SECOND CENTURY C.E. WRITERS

Plutarch, writing around the close of the first century C.E., states in a conversation on the diet of the Pythagoreans that although they abstained from fish, nevertheless when they ate flesh “it was most often that of sacrificial animals and after a preliminary offering to the gods.”<sup>7</sup> Once again this implies that there was a choice, for not all flesh was considered to have been sacrificial. A century later Pausanias described his visit to Phigalia in Arcadia where his main interest was in the shrine of Demeter. Pausanias uses the term τῶν ἱεροθύτων, genitive plural of ἱεροθύτης, to refer to the three citizens who functioned as ‘sacrificers’.<sup>8</sup> Although this is clearly a different word, it gives a significant insight into the limited number of sacrificial officiants.

## 5.2.3 LATER WRITERS

Athenaeus’ work *The Deipnosophists*, composed around the end of the second century C.E., also makes reference to τὰ ἱερόθυτα as being the cooks and butchers (‘Heralds’)<sup>9</sup> in Homer, who took responsibility for the sacrifice of victims in Athens. Once again we see that a *specific* group of people offered sacrifice.

A significant third century C.E. work is that of Origen in *Contra Celsum*. He makes eight references to *eidolothuta* but also uses the term *hierothutos* in 8.21.5 and 8.31.7. Celsus had argued that God is common to all men, is good, needs nothing and is without envy, and on this basis, people should feel free to be involved in public feasts, since in any case idols are nothing, daemons belong to God and therefore can receive our sacrifices and prayers. Origen responds by saying that what Celsus calls sacred-offerings - ἱεροθύτων - are actually sacrifices offered to idols or demons - εἰδωλοθύτων.<sup>10</sup> The

<sup>5</sup> SIG Vol. II No. 624, 42. (3rd Edition).

<sup>6</sup> SIG Vol. II No. 736, 23. (3rd Edition).

<sup>7</sup> Plutarch *Moralia, Table Talk*. 729C Tr. Minor, E.L., Sandbach, F.H. and Helmbold, W.C. LCL. 1961.

<sup>8</sup> Pausanias *Description of Greece, Arcadia* Ch. 42, 11-12. Tr. W.H.S. Jones. LCL 1935.

<sup>9</sup> Athenaeus *The Deipnosophists*, 660C., Tr. C.B. Gulick LCL 1941. The *censors* fulfilled such a sacrificial function among the Romans. The heralds’ function can also be seen in Homer, *The Iliad*. 3, 116-7 and 19, 250-1.

<sup>10</sup> H. Chadwick Ed. and Tr. *Origen: Contra Celsum* 8.21. Cambridge Univ. Press 1953 p.467.

latter term is thus used negatively and critically to portray Celsus' grave error and failure to comprehend what is truly sacred. Celsus argues that people feast with demons even by drinking water or breathing air but Origen responds by arguing that demons do not belong to God and that by eating ἱερόθυτα, people feast in reality with demons. (8.31.7). Origen makes no mention of meat markets, for his overall context is public sacrifices at public feasts. He describes such eating by Christians as equivalent to murder, based on 1 Cor.8:11. He argues that we should also abstain if the food has been associated "with evil and its consequences." (8.30).

One of the *Clementine Homilies*<sup>11</sup> employs the term λεγομένων ἱεροθύτων in the context of those who meet together publicly in cultic situations, no mention being made of meat market situations. The reference to 'so-called' indicates the polemical assault on those who associate with *hierothuta*, for such involvement unleashes destructive and deadly demonic power.

#### 5.2.4 CONCLUSION

The word *hierothutos* is a pre-Christian Greek term used to describe the idea of human sacrificial death in war, as well as the offering of animal victims in sacrifice. It consistently carries a positive, neutral, factual and descriptive tone, unless it falls into the hands of apologists such as Origen when it is used in a negative, polemical and derogatory manner and is invariably linked with the activity of demons. A variety of contexts have been discovered for the use of *hierothutos*, including that of food offered for sale in the market place. Indeed Paul himself chooses this term in 1 Cor.10:28 and puts it into the mouth of the presumed 'pagan host'. Interestingly Paul uses *hierothuton* here in a context which is not immediately or directly linked to the act of offering food to an image in a specifically cultic temple context. We now need to consider Paul's normal term for food offered to images.

### 5.3 THE GREEK ROOT εἰδωλόθυτ : A JEWISH/CHRISTIAN TERM

The term *eidolothuton* is the substantive neuter of the adjective *eidolothutos*. According to a TLG Computer Search, the root *eidolothut* appears a total of 113 times across the entire spectrum of Greek literature. Nine of these occurrences are in the N.T., one is in the Septuagint and 93 are in the period after 200 C.E. The number of pre-200

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<sup>11</sup> These are generally considered spurious and of 4th century C.E. dating, though a 2nd century C.E. date apparently is a possibility. See Ch. 15 "Heathen Worshippers under the power of the demon" in *The Clementine Homilies* Vol.17 of Ante-Nicene Christian Library Ed. Rev. A. Roberts and J. Donaldson. T & T. Clark, Edinburgh. Undated pp.180-1.

C.E., non- Biblical occurrences<sup>12</sup> is thus only ten and most of these will now be considered.

### 5.3.1 SEPTUAGINTAL WRITINGS

A form of the term *eidolothutos* makes its one and only appearance within the Septuagintal writings at 4 Maccabees 5.2.<sup>13</sup> This occurrence is set within the context of vv.1-3 and the RSV offers the following translation -

- v.1 The tyrant Antiochus, sitting in state with his counsellors on a certain high place, and with his armed soldiers standing about him.
- v.2 Ordered the guards to seize each and every Hebrew and to compel them to eat pork and food offered to idols.[εἰδωλοθύτων].
- v.3 If any were not willing to eat defiling food, they were to be broken on the wheel and killed.

Antiochus Epiphanes had been enraged on hearing that the people of Jerusalem were rejoicing over a rumour of his death. He thus pressurized the people to renounce obedience to the law but this had limited success, so he sought to force Jews to eat the sacrificial food which was forbidden to them and thereby to commit apostasy.<sup>14</sup> Such a context thus exhibits an emotive and far from neutral usage of the term, paralleling *eidolothutos* with pork and with apostasy.

### 5.3.2 DIDACHE OR TEACHING OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES

The Didache<sup>15</sup> was an early church manual which equated the eating of food offered to idols with the worship of dead gods - λατρεία γάρ ἐστὶ θεῶν νεκρῶν. Such eating is strictly forbidden in Didache 6:3. Although it remains an open question as to how far the *Didache* accurately represents the original *Teaching*, nevertheless this second century C.E. document, possibly going back in certain elements to the apostolic age or even to the Jerusalem church, does give us a glimpse of the negative attitude, in early Christianity, addressed to the 'Gentiles' or 'nations', regarding 'food offered to idols'. This can be compared with the occurrence in 4 Maccabees, which is not a Christian context.

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<sup>12</sup> Concerning the term *eidolothuton*, Friedrich Buchsel concludes that "in secular Greek it is as rare as *eidolon* in the sense of idol." (Article on *eidol* roots in Kittel Ed. TDNT, 1964.)

<sup>13</sup> H. Anderson (see article in J.H. Charlesworth Ed. *O.T. Pseudepigrapha* Vol. 2, Darton, Longman & Todd, 1985) notes the controversy surrounding the date of 4 Maccabees but places it in the spectrum between Pompey (63 B.C.E.) and Hadrian (120 C.E.) E. Bickermann narrows it down to 18-55 C.E.

<sup>14</sup> 4 Macc. 6:15 records the martyrdom of Eleazer, an old man from a priestly family, who refused to eat defiled food, even when he was offered a substitute cooked meat which he could have pretended was pork.

<sup>15</sup> *Didache* in *The Apostolic Fathers* Vol.I Tr. K. Lake LCL. 1977.

### 5.3.3 WRITINGS OF THE POST-150 C.E. ERA

A fascinating pattern of polemic can be discerned from the hands of second century C.E. writers. Justin Martyr (c.100-165 C.E.) ostensibly reports a debate in Ephesus between himself and a Jew named Trypho, a recent refugee from Palestine during the Bar Kokhba Revolt. (132-135 C.E.) Justin discusses Psalm 72, arguing that it does not apply to Solomon. Justin explains his view, with reference to the book of Kings, that Solomon was led into the sort of idolatry which Gentile Christians would flee even at the cost of death “rather than worship idols, or eat meat offered to idols”.<sup>16</sup> Interestingly Trypho responds by noting that many Christians still did eat such meat and at the same time argued that such eating did not harm them. Justin’s reaction to this is roundly to condemn such involvement by Christians. Indeed, Justin describes such so-called Christians as wolves, false prophets, false Christs, atheists and blasphemers. In short, he argues, such people are not true believers in Christ. Such a position is more extreme and severe than that taken in the New Testament itself, though we note that Justin did appear to make some sort of distinction between “worship of idols” and “eating meat offered to idols”.

Living and writing in the second half of the second century C.E., Clement of Alexandria made a number of references to the need for Christians to abstain from eating idol food. He argued that Christians should abstain<sup>17</sup> from such food, not out of fear, since there is no power in it, but because of our conscience and because of hatred of the demons to which the food was dedicated. Clement based his argument on a number of biblical references,<sup>18</sup> and his combining of different verses appears to lead him to claim that idol food was forbidden to Christians even in a market context, on the basis of Acts 15:24ff. As in the case of Justin Martyr, however, the neglected issue concerns that which was actually involved in the practice of *eidolothuta* and the fundamental issue of how *eidolothuta* were actually defined. These writers fail to consider how the Corinthians might have understood such terms as ‘worship’, ‘idol’ and ‘offering’. This sort of omission, combined with their polemical use of the essentially non-Greek term *eidolothutos*, lends weight to the possibility that there may have existed a considerable gulf between what the later Christians and Jews thought of *eidolothuta* and what the Corinthians themselves were doing and thinking in relation to first-century C.E. cultic festivals. Another black-and-white call for abstention is made in the late *Clementine Homilies*.<sup>19</sup> This call refers to the ‘table of devils’ but the statement reveals no attempt to

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<sup>16</sup> Rev. M. Dodds and Rev. B. Pratten *The Writings of Justin Martyr and Athenagoras* “Dialogue” Chapters 34 and 35. T. & T. Clark, 1892 p.130.

<sup>17</sup> See Paedagogus ‘On Eating’ II, 1 in Rev. W. Wilson *Clement of Alexandria Vol.1* in Ante-Nicene Christian Library T. & T. Clark, 1884 p.191.

<sup>18</sup> In *Paedagogus* II.7, Clement cites material from Acts 15:23, 28, 29; *Stromata* ‘On Avoiding Offense’ 4.15, 97.1-3 deals with references to Acts 15:29 and 1 Cor.8-10. Greek text is that of Dr. Otto Stählin, Leipzig 1906 p.291.

<sup>19</sup> *The Clementine Homilies* Vol.17, Homily 7, 8 “The Service of God’s Appointment” Ed. Rev. A. Roberts and J. Donaldson, T. & T. Clark. Undated p.134.

define or describe what actually took place in practice. Such anti-pagan polemic is used to strengthen and further reinforce the writer's Christian viewpoint on *eidolothuta*. The end-result among later Christian writers was that interpretation of N.T. material increasingly became directed along a single narrow track.

In his late second century C.E. work *Against Heresies* 1.6.3, Irenaeus condemns those Gnostics who felt free to eat idol food and who claimed no resulting defilement whatsoever. Such people claimed to have a spiritual substance which exempted them from physical harm, but Irenaeus classifies such people as those who will not inherit the kingdom of God.<sup>20</sup> In Section 5.2.2. we have already referred to Origen's arguments against the Middle Platonist philosopher Celsus who had attacked Christianity. Celsus had argued that *eidolothuta* were harmless, since idols were nothing and even demons belonged to God. Origen replies by arguing that harm to others does result from eating and that this should be clear "to those able to understand his words there [in 1 Cor.8-10]." (*Contra Celsum* 8.31). Such a statement is significant for it does seem to imply that Paul's words may not have been easily comprehended by readers. With regard to 1 Cor.10:20-21, Origen simply restates Paul's basic position, but without any attempt to explain any practicalities. (*Contra Celsum* 8.30.1).

#### 5.3.4 CONCLUSION

*Eidolothuton* does not occur at all in pre-Pauline Greek literature, except in the Septuagint at 4 Maccabees, which may or may not be pre-Pauline, depending on date. Its usage consistently carries the flavour of anti-pagan polemic and is emotive, negative, critical and decidedly non-neutral. Eating of *eidolothuta* is consistently condemned and with the progression of time in the early centuries C.E., so the polemic intensifies in severity, presumably necessitated by the persistence and intransigence of those who perpetuated their involvement with idol-food. What actually happens however is that the material in 1 Cor.8-10 and Acts 15 is simply repeated, rephrased or elaborated in a polemical context.

#### 5.4 SOME RABBINIC PERSPECTIVES ON SACRIFICIAL FOOD

Having considered in Section 4.5 some Rabbinic attitudes to images, it will be useful at this stage to note the key Rabbinic texts regarding food-to-idols. A wide range of attitudes existed in Hellenistic Judaism and what emerges through this section is that in reality there was no such thing as an official or universal Jewish attitude to *eidolothuta*.

The *Abodah Zarah* (Babylonian Talmud) was a severe tractate designed to protect Jews from the threat of assimilation. Section 1, 8a records the teaching of R. Ishmael in connection with Jews outside Palestine invited to an idolater's banquet for his son - "even

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<sup>20</sup> Revs. A. Roberts & W.H. Rambaut *The Writings of Irenaeus* in Ante-Nicene Christian Library T. & T. Clark 1884 p.26. Text from *Textus Minores* Vol. XLVIII. (See Bibliog.)

though they eat of their own and drink of their own and their own attendant waits on them Scripture regards them as if they had eaten of the sacrifices to dead idols, as it is said 'And he will call thee and thou wilt eat of his sacrifice'. (Ex. 34:15)"<sup>21</sup> For 30 days after a wedding, Jews could not participate in a banquet, regardless of whether or not it was stated that the banquet was linked with the wedding. Beyond that, if a link is stated, participation in food is forbidden, and according to R. Papa the prohibition is for 12 months, but if there is no such statement then it is permitted. (8a- b) The banning even of separately prepared food suggests a much stricter view than Paul's.

Degrees of involvement do however become apparent in Mishnah *Avodah Zarah* 2.3 which records Rabban Simon ben Gamaliel who prohibits hides pierced with round holes [made by pagan priests in a live animal to remove the heart for offering to an idol] but permits long holed hides. Flesh going into a place of idol worship is allowed but flesh coming out is prohibited, for it is as 'the sacrifices of the dead'. According to R. Akiba, it is prohibited to have business dealings with those travelling to idolatrous festivals but it is acceptable to deal with those returning. The former is forbidden because pagans might offer praise to their idols for successful business, whilst the latter is acceptable because it has *already* been used for idol worship.<sup>22</sup> (Mishnah A.Z. 2.3)

The *Masseketh Aboth* or *Pirque Aboth* 3.3, dated around 200 C.E., records R. Simeon's words that if three people eat at a table without speaking words of Torah, it is "as if they had eaten sacrifices [offered] to the dead". Words of Torah however make the meal as one eaten before the Lord. The 'dead' is an equivalent of 'idols'.<sup>23</sup> The theme of defilement is treated in Bab. Talmud, *Hullin* 1. 13b which states that just as a dead body defiles men and utensils that occupy the same tent, so also sacrificial idol offerings have the same effect."<sup>24</sup> (cf. Num. 19: 14) This is based on Israel's involvement with Baal-Peor in Psalm 106:28 where the 'dead' means lifeless gods. Mishnah, *Hullin* 2.7 says that one can validly slaughter for the pagan owner of a beast, but R. Eliezer declares this invalid because even if it was slaughtered with the intention that the idolater consume only the lobe of the liver, nevertheless the unexpressed thought of an idolater is directed to idolatrous practice and this invalidates the slaughter. According to Eliezer, the idolater's intention is to eat the flesh or offer it to his idol/god. The accepted opinion however was that of R. Jose who argued that the owner's intention<sup>25</sup> cannot nullify the validity of the

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<sup>21</sup> Rabbi Dr. I. Epstein Ed. *The Babylonian Talmud Avodah Zarah* Tr. with notes, glossary and indices. The Soncino Press, London 1935, Intro, p.12.

<sup>22</sup> See Philip Blackman *Mishnayoth Vol. IV Order Nezikin* 2nd Edn. The Judaica Press Inc., N.Y. 1963 p.456. This point generated conflicting viewpoints which are recorded in Bab. Talmud A.Z. 32b - 33a.

<sup>23</sup> J. Israelstam *Aboth*. Translated into English. The Soncino Press, London. 1935 p.28. Footnote 4 notes the link with powerless idols (Isa. 8:19) and defiling idols. (Ps.106:28).

<sup>24</sup> Eli Cashdan *Hullin - the Babylonian Talmud*. Vol.1 The Soncino Press 1948 p.62.

<sup>25</sup> Philip Blackman *Mishnayoth Vol V Order Kodashim*, 2nd Edn. The Judaica Press Inc., N.Y. 1964.

offering. Thus we see a variety of viewpoints emerging on the validity of an offering, tied in with ideas of degree of responsibility and intention.

Polemic regarding sacrificial food is found not only among certain Rabbis and Christians in the ancient world but also in modern literature. F. Büchsel, for example, presents the Nicolaitans<sup>26</sup> as guilty of libertinism, licentiousness and a total rejection of the will of God, the reason being that they desired to eat meat offered to idols. (Rev. 2:6, 14-15, 20) Büchsel continues "The same is probably true of Paul's opponents in Corinth." The dimension which scholars ignore, however, is just how those from a pagan background viewed the activity which the Judaeo-Christian world called *idolatry*. We move now from texts, teachings and terminology to actual cultic practice.

## 5.5 THE FORM OF GRECO-ROMAN SACRIFICES

The aim of this section is to investigate the form and nature of ancient sacrificial offerings, without becoming side-tracked by large amounts of descriptive yet peripheral material. We shall thus use a combination of primary and secondary materials in a series of brief sections in order to highlight the issues which we believe to be of direct relevance to 1 Cor.8-10. In Section 5.6ff these issues will then be developed and substantiated using specific and detailed primary sources.

### 5.5.1 THE NATURE OF THE EVIDENCE

The frustration we face in dealing with sacrifice is the limited, scattered and patchy nature of the evidence, both in amount and in the information revealed. In all of his detailed and widespread research, Price (*Rituals* 1984: 207) is forced to admit that "we are not fortunate enough to possess a complete ethnographic account of any one imperial sacrifice". We do not have a single case where full details of slaughter and meat division are given and Price is no doubt correct when he offers the explanation that "such regulations specify only what was open to doubt, not what was taken for granted." (*Rituals* 1984: 208). The available evidence does however invite, indeed demand, our attention, for Price believes that Greek divine sacrifices were subtly modified in order to articulate thinking about that ambiguous character, the Emperor. (*Rituals* p.207). The flexibility, complexity and variability of the role of sacrifices is noted by Price (*Rituals* p.231) and the range of customary practices is mentioned by Isenberg.<sup>27</sup> On the other hand, however, Jameson contends that there was virtually no essential change in the actual form of Greek animal sacrifice between 700 B.C.E. and 400 C.E.<sup>28</sup> He does however

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<sup>26</sup> F. Büchsel *eidolothuton* in *TDNT* Vol.II Eerdman 1964 S.V.

<sup>27</sup> M. Isenberg "The Sale of Sacrificial Meat" in *Classical Philology* Vol. 70, No.4 (1975) p.273.

<sup>28</sup> M.H. Jameson "Sacrifice and Ritual: Greece" in *Civilization of the Ancient Mediterranean: Greece and Rome*. Ed. M. Grant and R. Kitzinger, Vol.II C. Scribner's Sons, N.Y. 1988 p.959.

admit to a subtle range of variation between festivals. He also notes a factor which must have had a considerable bearing on the issue of idol food in Corinth -

In a civilization such as that of the classical Greeks, which had no bible or collection of central sacred texts and no priestly caste to interpret theology and define orthodox practice, religion was manifested primarily by the performance of traditional rites.

He adds furthermore that "Greek literature and documentary text abound with references to rites but have little to say by way of explanation of them." The gate was wide open to variant interpretation.

### 5.5.2 THE GREEK *thysia*

We have seen the scope for conflicting interpretation and viewpoint based on variant understandings of *eidolon*, *hierothuton* and *eidolothuton*. The term *thysia* was likewise open to ambiguity. We have argued that in the ancient world, as in modern Torajanese society, the sacred and the secular overlapped, indeed fundamentally were inseparable. S. Pierce<sup>29</sup> has the problem in a helpful nutshell concerning ancient sacrifice -

The essential problem here is the intrusion into the sphere of the 'sacred' of elements that in our culture are considered 'secular' or 'profane'. The solution to the problem of whether we are in the sacred or secular sphere is suggested, first, by linguistic facts. The semantic field of *thysia* embraces both the offering of an animal to the gods and slaughtering it for food. *Hiereuo* in Homeric Greek, and *thyo* in classical, mean both. Similarly, in both Homeric and classical Greek *hiereion* can mean both the victim of a religious offering and the victim of slaughter for a meal.

Herein lies enormous scope for conflicting interpretation and viewpoint. K. Meuli has made the point "Wohl aber ist jede Schlachtung für menschliche Mahlzeiten ein Opfer, *hiereuein* und *thyein*." (My Translation "What is true is that every slaughter for *the purpose*

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<sup>29</sup> Sarah Pierce "Death, Revelry and *Thysia*" in *Classical Antiquity* Vol.12 (1993) p.236. J.P. Kane ("The Mithraic Cult Meal in its Greek and Roman environment" 1975 p.327) has made the general point that "the sacrifice and the feast are complementary parts of the same celebration". It is not difficult to see, therefore, how abstention, abolition or amendment of the one would have consequences for participation in the other.



of providing food for a meal is a sacrifice, *hieruein* and *thuein*.”<sup>30</sup>) *Hiereuein* refers to the portions consumed in a communal meal, while *thuein* describes the offering of the burnt part. Meuli then goes on to show how the ‘sacrificial act’ does not always appear in a ‘religious’ and cultic context. He offers examples of settings where Greeks and others killed animals for purposes of hospitality and entertainment and where the gods were not named at all. For example in Herodotus 1.126, Cyrus slew (ἔθυσε) many animals and prepared a huge feast for the Persians in an attempt to encourage them to revolt and come under his rule. According to Herodotus 6.129, the rich Cleisthenes ‘sacrifices’ 100 cows to entertain the suitors of his daughter, yet without any reference to any divine recipient of the offerings. In *The Iliad* 6.174, the king of Lycia slew (ἔρευσεν) oxen for purposes of entertainment, and whilst this happens in the context of a journey guided by ‘the gods’, nothing is stated about an actual sacrifice to those gods. ‘Sacrifice’ once again is seen to encompass a broad spectrum of situations. The social setting and religious setting of any ancient context were inseparable, constituting an indissoluble unity. The *thusia* in a cultic setting clearly embodied religious value but the categories of ‘sacred’ and ‘secular’ cannot be used as measuring sticks of that value. Thus the crux of the matter, which will be developed in the context of the arguments underlying 1 Cor. 8-10, is that “because we cannot make a distinction linguistically or iconographically between ‘sacred’ and ‘secular’ meat preparation, we have to assume a fundamental unity of these two categories.” (Pierce 1993: 240)<sup>31</sup> We thus have a considerable boundary problem because linguistically the sacrifice and the meal constituted an inseparable unity. It would therefore not be surprising to find multiple interpretations of the perceived function of the *thusia*, each of which was valid and acceptable in the eyes of its respective adherents. This is undoubtedly true of Torajanese society and we shall argue that a similar dynamic was operative in Corinth.

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<sup>30</sup> K. Meuli “Griechische Opferbräuche” *Phyllobolia* (Festschrift für Peter von der Mühl) Basel 1945 p.215-6. Meuli interestingly argues that Greek sacrifice was not in essence an offering to a deity, an argument based partly on the worthless bits offered. He makes the following point in this context “Es ist ganz klar: eine Speisegabe kann das olympische Opfer ursprünglich nicht gewesen sein. Der Gedanke der Gabe ist auch hier, nicht anders als beim chthonischen Vernichtungsoffer, sekundär; die Vorstellung dass die Olympier am Mahle teilnehmen, ist aus den Bräuchen der Totenspeisung, aus den Gemeinschaftsmahlen mit den Toten und Heroen übertragen und hier niemals zu voller Deutlichkeit, zu wirklichem Ernst geworden.” My translation “It is quite clear that *the Olympian sacrifice cannot originally have been a meal offering*. The concept of a gift is secondary in this case, no different from that of the chthonic sacrifice of destruction. The idea that the Olympians took part in the meal comes from the rites of feeding the dead, taken over from the communal meals with the dead and the heroes, and here never reached full clarity, never became really serious.”

<sup>31</sup> Thus for example *thusia* could refer to sacrificial feasts of a jolly, celebratory nature, as in Herodotus 8.99. Significant also, although very early, is a mid-sixth century B.C.E. krater rim (Athens, Acropolis 654) showing a ‘picnic’ scene watched by Dionysos where satyrs revel and men cut up meat, yet there is no priest, altar or offering. The breadth of significance of the term *thusia* is confirmed in the recent work by L.B. Zaidman and P. Schmitt Pantel - *Religion in the Ancient Greek City*. (Translated from French into English by Paul Cartledge C.U.P. 1992. Reprinted 1995 p.32-3.) This work also argues the position that *thuein* included sacrifices to gods, heroes and dead mortals and that rituals for heroes and for gods were often indistinguishable (p.179).

As far as the actual practice of the sacrificial offering was concerned, Yerkes also has argued that the basic pattern of the Homeric sacrifice was preserved over many centuries.<sup>32</sup> The ritual essentially was made up of three component parts - firstly the preparation (lustration, barley grains ceremonial, prayer, casting of the animal's hair into the fire, slaying and flaying of the victim and processions); secondly the actual *thusia* (burning of thigh pieces and fat, with libations and eating of the *splanchna* or inner organs); and thirdly the feast, involving roasting of the victim, banquet, libations and music. Interestingly, and we contend significantly, such stages can be seen for example in *The Iliad* 1, 447-473, but the account is descriptive and offers nothing by way of interpretation, reflection or statement of significance. It appears that the officiant(s) made the burnt sacrifice and ate or tasted the inner organs or *splanchna*.<sup>33</sup> The bulk of the meat at a feast was consumed in a feast which of course raises the issue of the sacrificial or non-sacrificial nature of the meat that was actually consumed during the feast. The sacrifice and *splanchna*-eating by a specific individual or group of officiants may have some correlation with the situation envisaged by Paul in 1 Cor.10:20-21 and we shall consider the possibility that a more general eating may have been in Paul's mind when he wrote 1 Cor.8:1-13. This line of enquiry, which appears to have escaped the attention of commentators, merits some consideration and will be raised again in due course.

A number of other issues are raised by the practices of the Greek *thusia* and we note them briefly here, before taking them up in detail in subsequent sections. In post-Homeric times, the *splanchna* was known as the *hiera* ('sacred parts') and the *hiereus* was the official who presided at the *thusia*. It does seem clear, therefore, that not everyone offered sacrifice, but rather specified officials, although Attic vase paintings suggest that the central figure was not necessarily a priest. Thus sacrifices were made by appointed people and often in an atmosphere of revelry and joy. In Plato, *Laws* 8.835 D-E the Athenian stranger seeks to keep youthful licentiousness under control as their main interest in life is described as "sacrifices [θυσίαι], feasts and dances."<sup>34</sup> Regarding the sacrifice itself Harrison claimed that the verb *thuein* strictly referred to the portion that was burnt with a view to sublimation, whereas *hiereuein* referred to the unburnt portion which was sacred to the gods "but was actually eaten in communion by the worshipper."<sup>35</sup> It is this unburnt portion which interests us particularly. According to evidence from Cos around 300 B.C.E. the meat available for distribution to feasters was laid on the table of

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<sup>32</sup> R.K. Yerkes *Sacrifice in Greek and Roman Religions, and Early Judaism* A. & C. Black, London 1953 pp.99. Yerkes is yet another scholar who argues that in the *thusia*, the religious and the secular life were "so interwoven as to be well-nigh indistinguishable"(p.103).

<sup>33</sup> The fate of the *splanchna* is yet another area of ambiguity because the verb *pateomai* is itself ambiguous with respect to whether that portion was actually eaten or merely tasted.

<sup>34</sup> Plato, *Laws* Bk.8 Tr. R.G. Bury LCL 1926 p.149.

<sup>35</sup> Jane E. Harrison *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion* (3rd Edition) Cambridge Univ. Press 1922 p 10.

the god. (*SIG*, 3, 1106 - Line 100) Kadletz, however, argues that food items placed on the table were generally not sacrificed “but were dedicated to the god and afterwards taken by the priest.”<sup>36</sup> Farnell believes that the *thusia* offerings were not always brought up to or laid upon an altar.<sup>37</sup> These are important contributions to the debate for they raise the issue of the source of the food consumed in communal meals. In short, they open up the possibility that the consumed food may not have had its origin on the ‘table of the gods’ and that such food may not in fact have been considered ‘sacrificial’. We shall seek further to investigate the distinctions which seem to be emerging between the degrees of involvement of those who sacrificed the food and those who ate it, and also between food on the table and food distributed for communal consumption. Finally one piece of evidence suggests a similarity to the Torajanese situation regarding food division, namely that there was a basis of equal share division but that some were more equal than others. An Attic inscription of around 335 B.C.E. (*SIG*. 1, 271 Lines 11-16) allocates 5 pieces each to the presidents, 5 pieces each to the nine archons, but only one piece to each of the treasurers and managers.

### 5.5.3 A GRECO-ROMAN SACRIFICE

It is widely recognized by scholarship that our only extant prose description of a Greco-Roman sacrifice is that of Dionysius of Halicarnassus<sup>38</sup> who wrote in Rome after 30 B.C.E. His material is significant in adding to our understanding of ancient sacrifice. The festival he describes was ordered by the Roman Senate in connection with an impending battle encounter in the 5th century B.C.E. and involved procession, sacrifice, running, boxing and wrestling (7.73) the latter athletic activities recalling the language used by Paul in 1 Cor.9:24-27, even to the point regarding award of crowns for victors. Several of the issues we have raised find further support in Dionysius’ writing. For example, he underlines the fact that many of these observances were carried out “according to the customs of the Greeks” (7. 71.3) Dionysius repeats in 7. 72 that the sacrificial rites were clearly Greek. Indeed he affirms that these Greek sacrificial procedures were being carried out by Romans even in his own time at the very outset of the Christian era. (7. 72. 18). The entire proceedings began with a procession in honour of the gods from the Capitol through the Forum to the Circus Maximus. Details of the participants are then presented and it is noted that the procession included jesting and dancing in the manner of satyrs. Show-vessels were carried - “both those that were sacred to the gods and those that belonged to the state.” (7. 72.13). The *eikones* of the gods were carried along at the rear, showing the same likenesses as those made by the Greeks. The full orbit of divinities was

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<sup>36</sup> Edward Kadletz “The Tongues of Greek Sacrificial Victims” *HTR* 74 (1981) 28. Kadletz produces seven inscriptions from the period 400-100 B.C.E. which he argues shows that the tongue was the special prerogative of the officiating priest.

<sup>37</sup> L.R. Farnell ‘Sacrifice’ in *E.R.E.* Vol. 11 Ed. J. Hastings. T. & T. Clark 1920 s.v.

<sup>38</sup> Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Roman Antiquities* Bk. 7. Tr. E. Cary LCL 1943.

represented - the traditional Twelve Greek gods but also Saturn, Proserpina, Nymphs, Muses, and demi gods such as Hercules, Aesculapius, Castor, Pollux, Helen, Pan and others. Dionysius' source for this list was the Roman Historian Quintus Fabius, writing around the close of the 3rd century B.C.E.

After the procession, oxen were sacrificed by consuls and priests who first washed their hands and then purified the victims with clear water and sprinkled corn on their heads. Prayer followed and the assistants then hit the animal on the head and allowed it to fall onto the sacrificial knives. (7. 72.15). The animal was then skinned and cut up. A piece of each inward and each limb was taken as first-offering. These parts were salted and presented to the officiating priests who then placed them on the altars and burnt them, using wine. Hairs from the head of the victim were plucked and burnt. Unfortunately Dionysius gives no details of the division, allocation, cooking and consumption of meat which presumably followed this sacrificial act.

#### 5.5.4 GREEK VERSUS ROMAN RITES

A brief excursus into scholarly views on the nature of ancient sacrifice is required at this stage because it raises a number of issues which we see as highly relevant to the Corinthian situation. In 1922 Harrison (*Prolegomena* p.10) claimed that Greek religion contained two diverse and opposite factors - rites of 'service' linked to the Olympians or Ouranians and rites of 'aversion' linked to ghosts, heroes and underworld divinities. Thirty years later, Yerkes agreed in broad terms with the validity of such a distinction. (1953: 53-4). He explained in some detail that Olympian sacrifices were held in daylight, culminated in a joyous meal and consisted of dual worship, *thuein* describing the offering of the burnt part and *hiereuein* referring to the eaten portions consumed in a joyful meal. These upperworld deities were generally felt to be friendly but if the god did become angry, then the anger could be averted by carrying out neglected rites. On the other hand, chthonic sacrifices to heroes and underworld divinities were carried out at night by offering sacrifices into the ground in an attempt to placate evil ghosts and spirits. In contrast to the Olympian *thusia*, chthonic sacrifices were *enagizein*, involved total burning of the victim and thus allowed no shared meal. Such a division bears many resemblances to the two-fold nature of Torajanese traditional religion but it has a number of weaknesses, particularly in its failure to allow many exceptions and much overlap. For example Athenaeus, *Deip.*, 149C, published in late 2nd century C.E. in a description of an Arcadian feast, shows that sacrifices to the spirits of the departed were accompanied by the slaughter of many cattle and a feast for young men and their slaves. An inscription records a sacrifice at Mykonas to 'Zeus of the underworld' and 'Ge of the underworld' in which a communion meal was held around the altar and only citizens were allowed to partake. (*SIG* Ed. II 615 Line 25). Pausanias 10.38.8 mentions the cult of the gods in Lokris where *thusiai* were made at night and the meat was consumed before sunrise. In Paus. 10.4.10 blood sacrifices were made into the grave of a hero variously identified as

Xanthippus or Phocus but the meat was consumed at the place of the grave itself. Paus. 5.13.2, however, refers to a sanctuary to the hero Pelops set apart by his great grandson Heracles. Meat sacrifice was made to Pelops but there was a complete ban on anyone eating this meat, and transgression was punished by total exclusion from the temple of Zeus.

Thus the idea of a two-part division of Greek sacrifice needs to be challenged and indeed K. Meuli<sup>39</sup> attempted to do precisely that in 1945 by pointing out that Olympian sacrifices and feasts were identifiable within the cults of the dead/heroes. In view of the evidence in first Century C.E. Corinth for cults to Demeter, Asclepius and Sarapis, we cannot assume that Paul's mention of 'sacrifice' in 1 Cor.10:20 referred only, or even at all, to the traditional Olympian divinities. Cults involving heroes, the dead, semi-divinities or emperors raise huge questions about the defining of, and distinction between, 'worship' of the divine and 'respect' for present or departed human rulers.

Greek anthropomorphism which pictured gods as persons requiring human sustenance led understandably to the cult of the sacrificial offering and meal. Yerkes has argued that such concepts never developed in any real sense within the Roman religious system. On this basis, he argues, "We need not be surprised, therefore, that the sacrificial or sacramental meal shared with the gods was never developed among the Romans." (1953: 56). Roman religion tended to be primarily concerned with propitiation and aversion in the attempt to maintain right relations with the powers operative in the universe. Thus the sacrificial act itself appears to have been central in Roman religion and the rite demanded total accuracy down to the smallest detail.<sup>40</sup> That the Romans ate meals at cultic festivals will become apparent in subsequent sections. That their meals may well have differed in perceived significance from Greco-Oriental meals will be closely considered as we move into detailed primary material. The complexity is compounded, of course, not only by the pluralistic make-up of first century C.E. Roman Corinth, but by the fact that Roman religion itself undoubtedly was influenced by many cultural strains. Differing conceptions of the relative significances of sacrifice and meal inevitably produced complexity and its concomitant, namely multiple interpretations and consequent wide range of viewpoints.

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<sup>39</sup> Karl Meuli "Griechische" 1945: 195. Meuli also observes that which we shall later argue, namely that he can find no evidence of killing or eating a god. The food is normal human fare and Meuli thus rejects the idea of sacramental meals. (p.197). Writing around the same time as Meuli, A.D. Nock provides numerous instances where rites addressed to heroes clearly involved communal eating. The evidence he cites comes from a wide variety of situations in both time and space. See A.D. Nock "The Cult of Heroes" (*JTR* 37 (1944) 141-74) now available in *Essays on Religion in the Ancient World* Vol. II Clarendon 1972 pp.575-602 esp. 578-82.

<sup>40</sup> Two fascinating instances of Roman fanaticism for accuracy in ritual, especially where sacrificial offering as expiation was concerned, can be seen in Cicero *De Haruspicum Responsis*, 11, 23 (56 B.C.E.) and Plutarch, *Lives* 'Caius Marcius Coriolanus' 25, 3.

### 5.5.5 THE TABLE OF DEMONS

A final issue requiring some consideration from secondary, as well as primary, sources is that of the role of the table at cultic sacrifices and meals. 1 Cor.10:20-21, we shall argue, formed the climax of Paul's reasoning with the Corinthians, in which he warns them that they cannot as believers partake of the 'table of demons'. We shall therefore seek briefly to consider the two related issues of the function of the sacred table and the nature of the food deposited on it. Ancient literature provides us with occasional references to cult tables but there is very little information on the actual offerings - *trapezomata*. One of the earliest treatments of the issue was attempted by E. Johnson<sup>41</sup> who made a distinction between the altar on which burnt offerings were placed and the table on which fireless food offerings were spread. Such a clear-cut distinction however soon crumbles in the face of actual practice. Paus. 8.42.11-12 for example notes a case of Demeter worship in Phigalia in which no burnt-offerings were made. Rather there were various fruits placed on the altar - *bomon*, which in this case presumably functioned as the table.<sup>42</sup> Oil was then poured over this fruit. Polybius 4.35.4 records an incident around 220 B.C.E. of the killing of sacrificial officials - *ephors* - whilst on duty in the temple of Athena at the altar and table of the goddess. The two items thus seem both to have been present in this case. Likewise Polybius 32.15.7 describes a temple of Asclepius in Pergamus around 155 B.C.E. as possessing both tables and altars, which were smashed by King Prusias. Pausanias 8.31.3-4 describes an enclosure in Arcadia which housed multiple images of goddesses and a table on which were carved Pan with pipes, Apollo with harp and various nymphs, but no mention was made of any altar as such. Finally we find both altar and table present in the temple of Asclepius, as described in the 4th century B.C.E. Aristophanes' comedy *Plutus* 676-681. Having established, however, that there was an altar and table, the arrangement then reveals further complexity, and although *Plutus* was a comedy, it appears that the sacrificial procedure bore a strong resemblance to reality.<sup>43</sup> Whilst we are told in lines 660-1 that honey-cakes and bakemeats were burnt on the altar and that cheese-cakes and figs were placed on the holy table, (lines 677-8) we then read two interesting facts. Firstly that the priest removed food from the table and put it into a sack, presumably for his own purposes and secondly that he then visited every altar - *bomous* - to look for other tit-bits and leftovers, suggesting that unburnt food was also placed on altars. This issue of the nature and fate of the food on sacred tables will now be

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<sup>41</sup> Edwin Johnson "The Table of Demons: 1 Corinthians X.21" in *The Expositor* 2nd Series. Vol.8 (1884) p.242.

<sup>42</sup> D. Gill and S. Dow have concluded from their investigations that in some Greek cults, there were no images and no altars, the sacred table being held to be sufficient. See S. Dow and D.H. Gill "The Greek Cult Table" in *AJA* 2nd Series Vol.69 (1965) pp.103-114, esp. 109. One text on which Dow and Gill worked was Epigraphikon Mouseion, Athens No. 3822 which shows the use by *orgeones* of a cult table in which they name neither the god nor the hero, but simply indicate honour for fellow members who gave beneficial service.

<sup>43</sup> Aristophanes *The Plutus* Tr. and Comment by B.B. Rogers LCL 1972 esp. p.362.

pursued, having established that the basic arrangement of altar and table was by no means predictable or consistent.

Dogmatism in this complex area would be unhelpful, but we note the general statement by Gill<sup>44</sup> that once, in a *thusia*, the animal had been slaughtered, part of the god's portion was burned on the altar and part of the god's portion was placed unburned on the *trapeza*, the latter portion being termed *trapezomata*. The worshippers then ate the remaining food. Though far from easy to substantiate unequivocally - and the very ambiguity, we suggest, was part of the Corinthian problem - nevertheless it does seem to be the case that a distinction was made between food allocated to the god and that intended for human consumption. This of course highlights the issue of whether *all* the food was counted as 'sacrificial' or only the god's portions. If considered non-sacrificial, then Christians would have been able to justify their consumption of such food, as indeed they do in the Torajanese situation today. To complicate matters even further, Gill has concluded that the *trapezomata* were not as rigidly determined as the burnt, altar portions and indeed that they varied from cult to cult, though being similar in type to the food consumed by the worshippers. (*Trapezomata* 1974: 125).

A number of examples of primary evidence serve to illustrate the complexity of the *trapezomata*. That it consisted of small portions of an animal is suggested by *IG* II<sup>2</sup> 1356 (thighs, ribs and jaws), *IG* XII, 7,237 (a tongue and three other pieces of meat), *LSAM*, 13 lines 14-15 recording the situation at the Asklepieion in Pergamon before 133 B.C.E., namely offerings of a leg and skins, and *LSAM* 24A Lines 19-20 recording three pieces of meat and *splanchna* in an Asclepius cult sacrifice of the 4th century B.C.E. The actual fate of the god's portion is by no means consistent. A number of inscriptions suggest that from the 4th century B.C.E., the priests often took not only their own shares of food but also those portions allocated to the gods.<sup>45</sup> One wonders also just how sacred the contents of the *trapeza* were actually perceived to be, in view of the reference in *LSAM* 79 line 18 (1st century B.C.E.) to the fact that wood and oil were deposited on the table ready for a sacrifice. Alongside evidence which suggests that the priests had rights to the god's portion on the *trapeza*, there is the intriguing mention in Athen. *Deip.* 9.372 A-B from Delphi that at the *theoxenia* sacrifice, whoever brought the largest onion for Leto

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<sup>44</sup> D. Gill "Trapezomata: A Neglected Aspect of Greek Sacrifice" *HTR* 67 (1974) p.117-8. Even when sacrifices were carried in a procession, as in the Andanian Mysteries in *SIG* 736 dated around 100 B.C.E., the priests took care to extract the parts belonging to the god and then used the rest for the 'holy supper' - *to hieron deipnon*. (Section 95f.)

<sup>45</sup> This phenomenon can be seen in inscriptions already cited - *LSAM* 24A lines 23-25 and *LSAM* 13 - together with *LSAM* 40 lines 4-6, dated 3rd century B.C.E. from Thebes. An inscription from Iasos concerning the priesthood of Zcus Megistos (*LSAM* 59) actually gave the priest permission to take any votive offerings in the shrine that had become useless, whilst other offerings remained the property of the gods. The intriguing question of course is whether or not this handing over of votive offerings to a priest included food portions intended for the god once they had served their purpose. Presumably such food, and even more so the food for general eating, might then be reckoned by participants, in a later Christian context, for example, as having lost all sacrificial significance and thereby as being available for consumption as ordinary food.

should receive a portion from the table. Similarly Xanthos decreed for the votaries of Men Tyrannos at Sounion that if anyone filled the table for Men Tyrannos, he could take half of it. (*IG*, II<sup>2</sup> 1366). The implication of such texts<sup>46</sup> is that ordinary men or women, unless they were in some way special, did not usually or automatically eat from the *trapeza*. The *trapeza* portion thus appears largely to have been the preserve of the priest or other sacrificial official. We shall examine in the following sections the ways in which the sacrificial portion was viewed and whether or not it was seen as symbolic, real or somewhere in-between. If the *trapeza* offering was seen by some as merely nominal and if it was rare for ordinary worshippers to take food from the *trapeza*, then many Christian feasters could argue that the communal meal had only very remote significance, if indeed it had any at all, as an offering to divinity. The corollary of course is that those who sacrificed *and* ate from the table constituted a minority and could well have been the group that Paul had in mind when he wrote 1 Cor.10:20-22. This possibility, we contend, deserves serious consideration in the light of Zaidman and Schmitt Pantel's work. They argue that after the allocation of the *splanchna* and special portions, the remaining flesh was either boiled or consumed on the spot or then taken away for cooking and eating elsewhere. They conclude that "in this way a second circle of 'fellow-eaters' was constituted, larger than that of the original participants in the sacrifice who were privileged to eat the *splanchna*." (1995:36). This dual grouping we believe may well constitute the distinctiveness of the situation in 1 Cor.10:14-22, as opposed to that intended in 1 Cor.8.

## 5.6 THE PERFORMERS AND INTENDED RECIPIENTS OF SACRIFICE

Our main aim in this section is to investigate not only the identity of the performers of sacrificial acts but also that of the intended supernatural recipients of such offerings. Any remaining details of the actual practical form of sacrifices will also be included.

### 5.6.1 THE PERFORMERS OF SACRIFICIAL ACTS

It has become apparent thus far that the act of sacrifice tended to be the responsibility either of one or two individuals or of a small group of appointed people,

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<sup>46</sup> Other literary texts examined pointed out the need for a portion to be kept to one side and offered to the gods, but they added nothing new to the evidence thus far presented. See Arist. *The Birds* 518-9; Plutarch *Moralia*, Fragment 95; Paus. 9.40.11-12 (Boeotia); Julian *Orations: Hymn to the Mother of the Gods* 5.176D.



rather than of all those who attended a cultic feast.<sup>47</sup> Further primary evidence does appear to support such a claim, even though such material appears across a very wide spectrum of time. Homer in *Odyssey* III, 429ff. describes<sup>48</sup> a sacrifice to Athene in which a number of individuals deal with the heifer at the altar. Stratius and Echephron lead the animal by the horns, Aretus holds the water basin and a basket of barley grains. Thrasymedes clutches the crucial axe, while Perseus holds the bowl for the blood. The prayers, barley sprinkling and burning of animal hair are carried out by Nestor, before Thrasymedes strikes with the axe and Peisistratus cuts the animal's throat. The animal was then cut up as other people stood and watched. Nestor burned the thigh-pieces wrapped in fat and the sacrificer and his company then tasted the inner parts - *splanchna*. The goddess Athena thus received only a small portion and the remaining flesh was then spitted and roasted by a team of young men ready for general consumption. The tasting of the 'god's portion' and the subsequent consumption of roasted flesh appear therefore to have been two distinct stages in the process, although of course prayer had already been offered over the whole animal before the actual act of sacrifice. What does seem likely is that only certain people ate directly from the altar, as it were, namely those involved in the actual sacrificial act.<sup>49</sup> The worshippers ate the rest of the meat in the subsequent feast.

The association of the 'god's portion' with the priest or other sacrificial officials certainly opens up the very real possibility that the majority of the food - that eaten by the worshippers/others present - may not have been considered sacrificial in nature. This

<sup>47</sup> This basic distinction was made by O. Broneer on the basis of a deposit of votive terracottas at Corinth which he views as priestesses officiating at a religious ceremony "rather than mere worshippers". See O. Broneer "Hero Cults in the Corinthian Agora" *Hesperia* 11 (1942) p.129. Bookidis ('Ritual Dining' in *Greek Sanctuaries: New Approaches* 1993 p.51) notes that responsibility for *organizing* sacrifices and the banquet seems to have been in the hands of an official - *thoinarmostria* - and assistants. Bookidis makes the interesting observation that at the late 5th century B.C.E. Demeter site in Corinth, the initiatory rites occurred in the theatre, seating only 85-90 people. The dining area, on the other hand, could accommodate 200 diners. Dogmatism clearly is impossible, but it seems at least feasible that some, perhaps many, of the diners did not have an active part either in initiatory rites or sacrificial acts.

<sup>48</sup> Homer *Odyssey*. Tr. A.T. Murray LCL 1976. See *The Iliad* 1.446ff. for a very similar rendering of a sacrifice addressed to Phoebus Apollo. Another strong piece of evidence is an inscription attached to the peace treaty concluded between Miletus and Magnesia-on-Maeander in 196 B.C.E. (*Die Inschriften von Magnesia am Maeander*, No.98 Ed. O. Kern). The sacrificial bull was exhibited to Zeus by the stewards and a select group of five officials (Lines 14-18). They are then joined by a much larger group, who, led by the sacred herald, pray for peace, wealth and fruitful harvests (Lines 19-31). The actual sacrifice, however, is in the hands of only three officials - the permanent *stephanophorus*, priest and priestess (Lines 31-5) - but the procession includes many people (Lines 36-40). Each member of the procession receives a portion of the bull, but the three animals - a ram, a she-goat and a he-goat - sacrificed to named gods, are allocated to specific and prominent officials only (Lines 54-61).

<sup>49</sup> A great deal of scholarship on 1 Corinthians makes no distinction between sacrifice and meal, condemning both as idolatrous partnership with demons. Typical of such a viewpoint is that of Mark Harding "Church and Gentile Cults at Corinth" *Grace Theol. Journal* 10.2 (1989) pp.203-223 esp. p.208. Harding contends that, by participation in cult banquets, "one was brought into partnership with the god whose banquet it was and over which he presided ... Participation in the sacrifice and participation in the meal which follows means participating with demons. It means having fellowship with evil supernatural personalities."

would support the hypothesis that 1 Cor.8 dealt with the issue of temple *eating*, whereas 1 Cor.10: 1-22 tackled the problem of actual sacrificial acts accompanied by eating. A number of other inscriptions certainly do indicate the specific nature of sacrificial 'performers'. In an inscription dated 130-100 B.C.E. (*OGIS*, 339) from Sestos (Dardanelles), Menas is chosen as *gymnasiarch* and he offers a sacrifice for the people each month on the birthdays of the king. (Lines 31ff.) According to lines 61ff, he offered sacrifices to Hermes and Heracles in the gymnasium, but the inscription does then record, on the next day, Menas' invitation for others also to be involved in the sacrificial rites, not only those active in the gymnasium to whom he gave a share of the sacred offerings to take home, but also foreigners. Around 60 B.C.E. at Pegae on the Greek mainland, it is recorded that the city wanted to honour its benefactor's son, Soteles, by erecting a statue. (*IG VII*, 190). Although only the benefactor himself is recorded as sacrificing to all the gods when he stepped in to erect the statue and thereby spare the impoverished finances of the city, it is recorded that he gave a subsequent banquet for all the citizens, residents, Romans and slaves. Many attended but seemingly only one sacrificed. (Lines 25-28) A post 50 C.E. inscription from Aigiale<sup>50</sup> in Amorgos (Aegean) listed under *IG XII Facs.* 7 No.389 makes mention of Kritolaos and Parmenion, chorus leaders, who provided corn for the city and sacrificed oxen to Apollo and Hera (Lines 15-22), giving a feast for the people on two days. Line 30 interestingly notes that honours were awarded for *arete* (merit, virtue), *eunoia* (goodwill, kindness) and *philotimia* (love of honour) towards the city and for *eusebeia* (piety, reverence) towards the gods. Finally a later inscription dated 138-61 C.E. from Petelia in southern Italy (*ILS II*, I, 6468 Lines 11-12) adds the information that at the feast of the *Parentalia*, only one sacrificial victim was offered.

It is as we move from Greek to Roman sacrificial acts that we move into the increasingly complicated. Indeed it will become more and more apparent that Paul faced a nightmare of complexity in the phenomenon that he called *eidolothuton*. Plutarch for example in his *Table Talk* 693F records traditional *thusiai* which the *archon* - the ruler, magistrate or president, performed at the public hearth, namely the driving out of bulimy, whereby a servant is struck and expelled out of doors. The account informs us that everyone else carried out this rite at home. However Plutarch then claims that when he was *archon*, more people than normal took part in the public rite, after which they returned to their place at tables. The number of people who actually did take part in a ritual act, though generally small, does appear to have varied on occasion. Such complexity will be introduced in this section but considered further under the theme of the

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<sup>50</sup> Another inscription from the same location, but dated in the 2nd century B.C.E. (*IG XII*, 7515), specifies two commissioners as sacrificing a bullock for a public feast and athletic contest. (Line 46). One bullock, two sacrificers but *many* partakers of the feast are recorded (line 58). The text however does refer to this gymnasium feast as setting before this multitude "the rest of what is sacrificed". Pork could be carried away from the dining room but just what constituted 'sacrificial food' may well have been far from clear, had anyone chosen to make enquiries.

perceived functions of sacrifice. At least twenty statues show Augustus<sup>51</sup> as sacrificant, his sacrificial pose being like that of the Roman magistrate. However the successors to Augustus were presented almost naked and it appears that a Greek statue type was adopted in order to represent the Roman imperial image. Once again we see therefore the complexity of Greek attempts to accommodate the imperial image. As far as the performers of Roman sacrifice are concerned, Gill has a fascinating conclusion from his research, namely that "the covering of heads is not a general form of dress adopted by people attending a sacrifice; it is specific to those who are taking an active part."<sup>52</sup> Identification of those who fulfilled such a sacrificial office at Corinth is considerably helped by available inscriptional evidence. It can be seen that such positions,<sup>53</sup> combining civic and religious function, were held by members of the social élite. For example, a white marble block from the forum area lists the career of Aulus Arrius Proclus, whose presidency probably fell in 39 C.E. Kent (No. 156 pl. 15 pp.73-74) offers the following translation -

The Hieromnemes of the Caesarea (erected this monument) to Aulus Arrius Proclus, son of ....., of the tribe Aemilia, (who was) augur, chief engineer, aedile, duovir, imperial priest of Neptune, *isagogeus* of the Tiberea Augustea Caesarea and *agonothete* of the Isthmian and Caesarean games.

Such positions carried great honour and prestige in society, and the dilemma for anyone in the Corinthian church called to balance such religious and political responsibility would have been enormous, and especially so for a Christian expected to engage in specific acts of sacrifice. Similar predicaments are the daily experience of many members of the Torajanese churches in modern Indonesia.

A range of other inscriptions was examined with the aim of identifying the nature of the sacrifice and the identity of the sacrificer(s). At Narbo, dated 12-13 C.E., an inscription (*ILS*.112 Lines 15-20) records sacrifices made with regard to Emperor Caesar Augustus. At the altar in the forum, and on specified dates, three Roman equites and three freedmen offered one victim each. Communal eating is not mentioned, however. These officials, though, did supply incense and wine to the colonists and inhabitants on

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<sup>51</sup> Evidence of imperial figures dressed with toga, drawn up over the head - *capite velato* - in the portrayal of sacrificant function is listed by F.P. Johnson *Corinth IX: Sculpture 1896-1923 ASCSA 1931*: Augustus found in Julian Basilica in east end of the Forum (No. 134); Nero (No. 137). See also Trajan in a sacrificial relief in I.S. Ryberg *Rites of the State Religion in Roman Art* (MAAR 22, Rome 1955).

<sup>52</sup> D.W.J. Gill "The Importance of Roman Portraiture for Head-Coverings in 1 Corinthians 11:2-16" in *Tyndale Bulletin* 41.2 (1990) p.248.

<sup>53</sup> Other priestly offices held, but for which space prevents detailed presentation in our text, can be seen in Kent 86 pl. 17 no.193. (priest of *Tutela Augusta*); 89 pl. 17 no.199 (to the female priest Polyacna) and West, Nos.86-90 (Tiberius Claudius Dinnipus as priest of Victoria Britannica. Initial appointment around 55 C.E.)

that day. A decree on Imperial Cult<sup>54</sup> and letter of Tiberius from Gytheum, Laconia and dated 15 C.E. mentions a *trapeza* in the middle of the theatre (Line 5). Sacrifices were to be offered by councillors and magistrates. A huge procession moved from the temple of Asclepius to that of Caesar but on arrival, only the *ephors* are recorded as sacrificing a bull, though other sacrifices did follow in the market place (Lines 25-30). Several days of festivities and games, presumably including meals, were held. In 18 C.E. a decree on worship of emperors was issued in the Forum Clodii (Etruria). This decree (*ILS*, 154) stipulates two victims to be dedicated on the birthday of Augustus and a feast to be held on the birthday of Tiberius Caesar, involving decurions and people.<sup>55</sup> A calf was to be sacrificed annually on the latter occasion (Line 9). Presumably the sacrificial calf was not sufficient to supply the entire gathering with meat for consumption. Before the eating, the geniuses of the emperors were invited to feast at the altar of Augustan divinity. In contrast to the limited number of sacrificial officials thus far observed, a letter of Gaius (*ILS* 8792, dated 27 C.E.), addressed to the league of Achaeans, Boeotians, Locrians, Phocians and Euboeans, thanks them for each personally offering sacrifice for his welfare. An interesting mixture of sacrificial performers is to be seen in a cenotaph for Lucius Caesar, dated 2-3 C.E. in Pisa (*ILS*, 139). Annual sacrifices were to be made to L. Caesar's departed spirit by the magistrates or those in charge of the administration of justice. A black bull and ram were to be sacrificed but the offerings were to be burnt up (Lines 16-25). At the point before the burning, individual offerings were invited in the form of one taper, one torch or one crown. This text unfortunately is silent regarding a meal, though this may have been so normal and so presumed as to be taken for granted and thus omitted from the records which have come down to us. *ILS* 140 records the sudden death of Gaius Caesar, son of Augustus, in 4 C.E. (Line 12). This inscription makes similar provisions to that of *ILS* 139 but states that on the designated day of mourning, sacrifices and public banquets were forbidden. One example where various individuals are named as offering sacrifices and giving public feasts, combined with athletics, chariot-racing and horse-racing, is that of the imperial festivals at Ancyra recorded in an undated document. (*OGIS*, 533).

The emerging pattern of sacrifice is that of individuals or small groups of people

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<sup>54</sup> The text consulted was that in V. Ehrenberg and A.H.M. Jones *Documents Illustrating the Reigns of Augustus and Tiberius*, 102 p.80-1. The text is also available in *SEG*, xi.922-3.

<sup>55</sup> The sacrificing of an animal(s) which represents only a minute fraction of the total meat required for consumption is seen also in second century B.C.E. Cato's *On Agriculture*, 141 in which three victims of three kinds - swine, ram and bull - are offered in a request for help - a *suovetaurilia*. This practice of selection from species, found also in Toraja today, seems to be an ancient tradition.

offering small amounts of meat in sacrificial acts.<sup>56</sup> The act of sacrificial offering was thus in one sense a 'minor' event, relative to the number of people at the feast and to the total amount of meat actually consumed by those people.

## 5.6.2 THE INTENDED RECIPIENTS OF SACRIFICIAL OFFERINGS

### 5.6.2.1 Greco-Oriental Sacrifices

A decree from Sardis dated in 5-2 B.C.E. (*IGR IV*, 1756) records the league of Greeks of Asia and the people of the Sardians and the *gerusia* honouring Menogenes, son of Isidorus, son of Menogenes. Detailed evidence of sacrifice is absent from this material but the simple and repeated statement is made that *thusiai* were offered *tois theois*. However our research thus far has indicated that the presence of a word such as *thusia* and the use of the term *eidoleion* in the biblical text are by no means automatic guarantees that we are dealing with a sacrifice directed to an Olympian deity in a single temple building context. The reality of the practice of sacrifice at ground level was far more complex and in this section we shall attempt to illustrate that the intended recipients of sacrifice, as in the Torajanese situation, could be multiple,<sup>57</sup> ambiguous and inconsistent, leading to a real ambivalence regarding the issue of whether participants were worshipping divinity, honouring humanity or were doing both or neither of these things.

The complexity of Greek sacrificial recipients will be considered firstly and somewhat briefly, before we attempt to tread the minefield of the Roman counterpart. A lengthy 4th century B.C.E. Athenian inscription (*LSCG Supp.* 19) describes the clan of the Salaminioi who sacrificed to seven gods and heroes (line 19), offering a goat, sheep, pigs and an ox (to Herakles) and a holocaust ram offering to Herakles' companion in myth, Iolaos. (line 79ff). We need to beware of over-generalizing and over-classifying ancient sacrificial practices. Gradations did exist and ritual could reflect the overlap of categories.<sup>58</sup> Pausanias for example describes ritual practice in Corinth at the festival of Heracles, a man who became a god. He relates the story of Phaestus who, on arrival in

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<sup>56</sup> Lack of space prevents the presentation of detailed evidence here but the following were found to strengthen this conclusion - a case from Nero's reign in 66 C.E. - *Acta Fratrum Arvalium* (Henzen) - Berolini: Typis Et Impensis Georgii Reimeri, 1874, 80-85. - in which Marcus Aponius Saturnicus sacrificed single animals to various emperors; a document from Cys (Caria) dated 52-3 C.E. and published by Smallwood No. 135; *ILS* 5050 in 17 B.C.E. in which year Imperator Caesar Augustus made specified sacrifices after the Greek manner during several days of games and festivities.

<sup>57</sup> M. Jameson "Sacrifice and Ritual" 1988: 973 has observed the fact that even within a single festival, a whole range of rites and intended recipients could be incorporated.

<sup>58</sup> L.R.Farnell has pointed out that it was very hard to distinguish between ritual to heroes and that to earth deities or *daimones*, which made it hard to decide whether the intended recipient belonged to one class or the other "and in the shifting popular tradition the one could easily be transformed into the other." (*Greek Hero-Cults and Ideas of Immortality*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1921 p.239). Similarly W. Burkert (*Greek Religion* 1985: 199) has argued that "the cult of the dead and the cult of the gods have much in common both in the patterns of ritual and in their psychological and social functions. In both there are fixed places of worship set apart from profane uses, and in both there are sacral meals through which common fellowship is established, with animal sacrifices, fire, food offerings, libations and prayers."

the Sicyonian land, discovered to his horror that the people gave offerings to Heracles ὡς ἥρωι - 'as to a hero'. Phaestus insisted that it ought rather to be the case of ὡς θεῶ - 'as to a god'. Pausanias distinguishes the former from the latter by the use of ἐναγίζοντας as opposed to θύειν. The possibility of confusion and ambiguity thus did exist, regarding the intended recipients of such sacrifices and Pausanias,<sup>59</sup> as it were, underlines the complexity -

Even at the present day the Sicyonians, after slaying a lamb and burning the thighs upon the altar, eat some of the meat as part of a victim to a god, while the rest they offer as to a hero.

Aeschylus in the 5th century B.C.E. in *Suppliant Maidens* 23ff described a group of women who fled from Egypt and headed for Argos. On arrival, they invoked *all* the divine help they could get, using the order of invocations in offering libations - Olympian Zeus, the heroes and powers of the dead, followed by Zeus the Saviour. No distinctions appear to have been made by these women. One situation in which distinctions were sought is that presented by Plato, *Laws* 828C which dealt with the issue of the arranging and ordaining of State sacrifices. The Twelve gods were to have feasts, choirs, musical and gymnastic contests allocated to them and then Plato notes the need to decide the rites suitable for *chthonian* gods and to determine which of those rites could be mingled with celestial rites. This presumes that mixed recipients of sacrifice was a reality of festivals.

We have already noticed that although scholars have sought to distinguish between Olympian and chthonic ritual characteristics, nevertheless the chthonic holocaust, typified by such writers as Homer, (*Odyssey* 10.517-537 and 11.25-50), was not consistent in its occurrence. Indeed dead heroes often received normal victims in normal sacrifice as a prelude to a communal meal, such as in the evidence argued by K. Meuli for the Hellenistic period, namely that offerings to the dead were carried out according to Olympian, not chthonic, rites.<sup>60</sup> The possible role of the dead does require further research in the context of Corinthian cultic practices for its possible influence cannot be lightly dismissed. Even grave monuments could be referred to in a number of writings as *trapeza*.<sup>61</sup> After all, in some sense, heroes were perceived as having attained a measure of divine status and in

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<sup>59</sup> Pausanias *Descriptions of Greece Bk.II Corinth*, 10.1 Tr. W.H.S. Jones. LCL 1918.

<sup>60</sup> Karl Meuli "Griechische Opferbräuche" in *Phyllobolia für Peter von der Mühl zum 60 Geburtstag*, Basel, 1945 pp.185-288 esp. p.195. Meuli briefly notes inscriptions from Amorgos and Cos (3rd and 2nd centuries B.C.E.) which indicate a common meal following a sacrifice to heroes. The Diomedon inscription from Cos (*SIG* 1106.40) shows a leg and skin for the priest, followed probably by a common meal. *IG* 12(3). 330 shows offerings to the Muses and heroes, with usual animal parts burned, but all the rest serves as a common meal. Meuli believes that sacred meals with the dead were extended to hero-cult and eventually to cults of the gods.

<sup>61</sup> See for example Cicero *De Leg.* 2.26.66; Plutarch *Moralia* 838 C-D and 842 E. Plutarch *Greek Questions* 296F-297A notes that, with regard to sacrifices on behalf of the dead among the Argives, a sacrifice to Apollo was made after the mourning and to Hermes 30 days later. Again we seem to have a case of dual recipients.

fact Gill has produced detailed evidence - which consideration of space prevents us from including here - to show that both heroes and gods were portrayed as reclining at tables. He draws the significant conclusion that "... no distinction between gods and heroes seems to have been made in the historical period." (*Trapezomata* 1974: 122).<sup>62</sup> The sort of confusion in this realm can be seen in the situation described by Pausanias 5.20.16 with regard to the race-course on which horses unaccountably began to panic with fear on reaching Taraxippus, the terror of horses, which had the shape of a round altar. Because this was a dangerous spot, charioteers offered *thusiai* but apparently there was fundamental disagreement about the nature of the problem and presumably therefore about the intended recipient(s) of these sacrifices. Among the various views held, some felt that this spot was the tomb of an original inhabitant who was a skilled horseman. Others claimed that the location was controlled by a hostile deity - *daimona*. Presumably most gave little thought to the matter, but rather were more concerned for the end itself, namely to stay firmly on their chariots and thereby avoid sustaining injury.

Complexity, ambiguity and inconsistency are evident. On the one hand, Pausanias claims that Asclepius was considered a god right from the beginning (*Corinth* 26.10) and that he received divine honours from the Tithoreans and Phocians (*Phocis* 32.12). On the other hand we learn from Aelius Aristides' first-hand encounter<sup>63</sup> with the healing cult of Asclepius in 146 C.E. that he had two instructions from Asclepius. One involved a sacrifice into a trench in the ground, presumably to chthonic powers and then a full sacrifice to Asclepius which was then divided among Aristides' fellow-incubants. On top of that there remains the ambiguity concerning the nature of food at the Corinthian Asclepieion because of the location of dining rooms in-between the sacrificial and recreational areas. Aristides describes also, in "Regarding Sarapis" *Oration* 45.23, how Sarapis is worshipped by some men in place of all the gods; some view him as a special universal god for the whole world. Sarapis is thus invited to banquets as host and chief guest, as will become apparent in due course. At the same time, however, Aristides urges people to address many other gods and goddesses. (*Oration* 46.42 - "Isthmian Oration Regarding Poseidon".) In his *Sacred Tale* 3, 45-48, Aristides records a joint appearance of Sarapis and Asclepius, and the ensuing uncertainty whether he has offered sacrifice to Zeus or to Sarapis.

The potential for ambiguity and multiple viewpoints existed on every level. Even if we were to argue that the Corinthian situation involved only the Olympian *thusia* to single deities, we would still have to acknowledge that even as early as Hesiod - probably in the 7th century B.C.E. - ambiguity about the relations between gods and mankind was being

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<sup>62</sup> We note in passing Gill's admission regarding the nature of the *thusia* that it is still "not fully clear" whether it constitutes a common meal of gods and men or a meal among men preceded by a gift of food to the gods." (*Trapezomata* 1974: 123).

<sup>63</sup> See C.A. Behr *P. Aelius Aristides: The Complete Works*. Vol. II Orations 17-53 esp. 48:26-7 Tr. by C.A. Behr. Brill, Leiden 1981.

depicted over the issue of the unfair division of food such that the gods received the mere bones and fat.<sup>64</sup> Presumably some would have argued the sheer nonsense of such a sacrificial act. At the other extreme if we were to argue that food was offered to the dead in Corinth, then we would need to recognize that such meals may well have been intended, not as worship or sacrifice, but as renewal of table-fellowship with departed members of the kin, as in the modern Greek All Souls' Day. Whatever the particular cults practised in mid-first century C.E., we contend that the root problem for Christian believers invariably lay in the essential ambiguity, boundary issues and conceptual variation which characterized such cults. These factors in turn determined the perceived functions not only of sacrifice<sup>65</sup> but also of communal meals, as we shall shortly see. The crux of Greek sacrificial ritual was the carrying out of ritual and symbolic acts which was not geared to rational analysis. As long as the whole system operated satisfactorily, few would bother to enquire into its precise mechanics and ask the sort of questions we are raising about sacrifices. It was the advent of a challenge to the *entire* system which triggered and forced people to think, and part of that trigger came from the pen of the apostle Paul.

#### 5.6.2.2 Roman Sacrifices

In this section we shall attempt to demonstrate that a range of perspectives existed regarding the perceived recipients of Roman sacrifices. It was this variation, we shall argue, when combined with the different views on the purpose, function and meaning of sacrifices, which was a contributory cause of multiple viewpoints on the nature, definition and boundaries of worship and idolatry amongst believers in the Corinthian Church. As we established the essential ambiguity of imperial images in Chapter 4, so it will come as no great surprise that Roman imperial sacrifices demonstrated this same underlying ambivalence. Although Price (*Rituals* 1984: 210) argues that "the emphasis is in general on sacrifices on behalf of the emperor", he nevertheless repeatedly admits that we are dealing here with nuances, gradations, hesitations and contrived blurring of the boundaries between types of sacrifices and their intended recipients, all of which reflect the fundamental ambivalence of the relationships between gods and emperors. (Price *Rituals* 1984: 211, 213, 215, 216, 232-3). The superabundance of literary and epigraphical evidence in this field demands the presentation of a few selected examples only, to

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<sup>64</sup> See Hesiod, *Theogony* 535-557, Athenaeus 8.364D and Aristophanes, *Birds* 1515-1524 for material on mankind's meanness in offering inferior parts to the gods during sacrificial offerings.

<sup>65</sup> A.D. Nock has observed what he believes to have been an increasing trend to secularization in associations which met in temples just prior to, and during, the early Christian centuries. For example he quotes a papyrus dated 69-58 B.C.E. probably from Philadelphia, which describes the Guild of Zeus Hypsistos which fails to treat Zeus Hypsistos as the object of worship. (lines 8-10). See A.D. Nock "The Guild of Zeus Hypsistos" in *Essays on Religion and the Ancient World* Vol. 1 Oxford: Clarendon Press (1972) pp.414-443. This Egyptian association thus seems to have had a predominantly social function. M.P. Nilsson has claimed that as pagan cults turned to the increased use of lamps and incense in late antiquity, so the offering of animal sacrifices became increasingly rare and irregular. See M.P. Nilsson "Pagan Divine Service in Late Antiquity" in *H.T.R.* 38 (1945) pp.63-9.



illustrate and substantiate our hypothesis that a basic ambivalence helped to produce a complex situation leading to multiple viewpoints on such boundary issues as humanity/divinity and honour/worship.

A range of sacrificial texts records offerings 'on behalf of' the emperor, though in many cases it has to be admitted that the gods, if any, to whom sacrifice is directed, are not actually mentioned. At the period of the writing of 1 Corinthians, we have a record (*P. Oxy 1021*) of the proclamation of Nero's accession dated 17 Nov. 54 C.E. On this occasion, sacrifices of oxen were to be directed to *all* the gods (line 17) as an expression of thanks. Indeed there is evidence that some emperors resisted the idea of sacrificial offerings being made to human beings. Thus Dio 58.8.4 states that Tiberius took that sort of line and actually forbade any attempt to propose honours for himself. It needs to be recognized however that one of his motives in this was his desire to oppose the threats to his position from the priest Sejanus to whom sacrifices were indeed being made. (Dio 58.7.2 and 11.2). Claudius, in similar vein, whilst he himself is known to have offered a sacrifice, (Dio 60.6.9) nevertheless he forbade anyone to offer him any *thusia* - or to worship him - *proskunein*. A description of a local imperial festival - that recorded in *SEG xi, 923* - aimed to secure the health and long rule of the emperors (line 30) and yet this inscription from Gytheum provides no evidence of a sacrifice actually offered to an emperor.<sup>66</sup> Aelius Aristides, *Oration 50,26* records sacrifice during an annual vow to the gods on the emperor's behalf.

Alongside all this evidence, however, we must balance those sources which do indicate situations in which sacrifices were directed towards the emperors themselves. The Narbo inscription dated 12-13 C.E. and referred to previously (*ILS*, 112) stipulates the use of incense and wine for the supplication of the divinity of Emperor Caesar Augustus. An inscription from Ancyra (*OGIS*, 533) records the sacrifices of the Galatians to divine Augustus and divine Rome, mentioning the holding of public feasts by individuals. Such feasts included athletic games and the *hecatomb* - a great public sacrifice and feast ideally involving 100 oxen - is mentioned. The *Arval acta* of 66 C.E., and previously noted (Footnote 56), lists sacrifices of an animal to each of divine Augustus, divine Augusta and divine Claudius i.e. to deceased emperors. Indeed, considerable evidence exists for the

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<sup>66</sup> Whilst language may have sometimes suggested the divinity of emperors, the reality indicated that such offerings were directed to the gods. See, for example, evidence in the following material which we consulted - *ILS*, 8792 (Acraephiae); *OGIS* 493; *IG* II.2, 1077; *IGR* IV, 33, 251, 1028, 1124; *IG* XII Supp. 124, Eresus (Lesbos) shows sacrifices to all gods and goddesses for news of the safety and victory of Augustus; *IGR* IV, 1756, from Sardis indicates sacrifices to the gods for the coming of age of Augustus' son, Gaius Caesar. The potential for complexity, ambiguity and confusion is considerable, however, for as Borgen has pointed out in his very recent work "... the veneration of the emperor went together with the worship of various gods." See P. Borgen "'Yes', 'No', 'How Far'?": The Participation of Jews and Christians in Pagan Cults" Ch.2 of *Paul in His Hellenistic Context* Ed. Troels Engberg-Pedersen. T. & T. Clark (1994) pp.30-59.

rendering of sacrificial offerings to the departed spirits<sup>67</sup> of Lucius Caesar (*ILS*. 139 from Pisa in 2-3 C.E.), of Gaius Caesar (*ILS*. 140 from Pisa in 4 C.E.) and to Bathyllus, freedman of Augusta (*ILS*. 4995 from Rome at the tomb of freedmen and slaves of Livia). The case of emperor Gaius himself is described at some length by Philo when the latter visited *Rome* at the time of the Jew/Greek dispute over civil rights. Gaius accuses the Jews of failing to recognize his divinity and the Greeks then accuse the Jews of failure to sacrifice thank offerings for Gaius' preservation. The Jews claim they did make *hecatombs* but Gaius exclaims "All right, that is true, you have sacrificed, but to another, even if it was for me; what good is it then? For you have not sacrificed to me."<sup>68</sup> Gaius, though certainly not typical of Roman emperors, dismisses the Jews as foolish for refusing to believe that he has the nature of a god - θεοῦ κεκλήρωμα φύσιν. Dio (59.4.4) notes Gaius' eventual desire to receive sacrifices as to a god,<sup>69</sup> but he notes that initially he tried to stop sacrifices being offered to his Fortune. Dio notes that some called Gaius a demigod - ἡρώα (59.26.5) but that many people of all social positions called him and treated him as a god - θεόν. (59.27.2). Dio himself speaks of Gaius as wearing various clothes when he pretended to be a god. (59.26.10).

The case of Gaius exemplifies that degree of uncertainty and ambiguity which characterized a considerable number of situations. A piece of evidence from Cys (Caria) dated 52-53 C.E.<sup>70</sup> shows in lines 11-12 a priest of the divine Augustus offering sacrifices to the gods *and* to the Augusti. The terminology indicates thankfulness to the gods, and to the people of the Cyites. In all of this evidence, however, there is no indication whatsoever of any attempt to establish communion with the gods. One inscription loaded with ambiguity is that of *ILS*, 5050 dated 17 B.C.E. at the Campus Martius in Rome, in which Imperator Caesar Augustus offers nine whole she-lambs and goats to the divine *Moerae* or Fates in the Greek fashion for the safety, victory and health of the Roman people and his own family. He then sacrificed a bull to Jupiter, cakes to the divine Ilithyiae and a cow to Juno. Following this, he offered a pregnant sow to Mother Earth at night, and then he and Marcus Agrippa offered nine each of three types of cakes to Apollo and Diana. On the very spot where night sacrifices had been made, theatre, stage, chariot racing and a host of games were hosted for a further seven days, indicating yet again the indivisibility of religion and culture within Roman society. One inscription from Thyatira

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<sup>67</sup> We note with interest that following Gaius' assassination, one of the guilty parties, Chaerea, was executed as an example to others but Josephus records that Roman people brought offerings (ἐνοργισμῶν) with which they honoured (ἐτίμησαν) not only Chaerea but many other dead relatives. They called on Chaerea not to be angry with them, demonstrating a real belief in the power of departed souls to affect the living. (See *Jewish Antiquities* 19. 248-73).

<sup>68</sup> Philo *The Embassy to Gaius* Section 353-7. Tr. F.H. Colson LCL 1962.

<sup>69</sup> Other examples of offerings ὡς θεῷ are to Caesar on his death (Dio 45, 51, 1) and to the Greek Lysander (Plutarch, *Lysander* 18.3).

<sup>70</sup> This text, published in *BCH* XI (1887) pp.306-8, was read in Smallwood, *Documents* No. 135.

(*IGR*. iv, 1270 and 1273) indicates that sacrifices at the Sebasta Tyrimnea in one case were offered only to the god, Tyrimnus, but in another case, the prayers and sacrifices were offered to the god *and* to the emperors. Similarly we noted in *I. Ephesus* 1a, 26, lines 8-9 annual sacrifices to Artemis and to Commodus (180-192 C.E.) 'on behalf of his eternal continuance'. Some inscriptions, such as that from Philadelphia (*IGR*, iv, 1615, lines 17-18) and Messene (*SEG*. 23, 208, line 8), actually stated that the sacrifices were 'of' the emperor and thus the relationship between emperor or god is not clear or specific. In a situation described by Persius, and written around the time of Paul's ministry, (*Satires* 6. 48-51), a military victory, celebrated on the arrival of a despatch from Caesar, is recalled. Feasting and contests were arranged in honour of the gods *and* the Genius of the General. The dividing line between divinity and humanity was both fluid and flexible. *IGR* iv.39 records direct imperial sacrifices to Augustus at Mitylene but the possible use of mottled animals suggests doubt about the fully Olympian divine nature of Augustus. Brow markings may have been used to distinguish between imperial sacrifices and ordinary divine sacrifices.<sup>71</sup> Philostratus, *Heroicus* 19 offers an example of two sacrificial victims to Achilles, one white and one black because of the ambiguous status of Achilles between human and divine.

Some might argue, of course, that for Christians involved in such sacrificial occasions, it was equally wrong whether the intended recipients were gods, departed spirits or emperors. That however raises the enormous issue of the difference between worship of a divinity which would have been somewhat difficult to justify and honour/respect/commemoration of a human benefactor which involved fulfilment of a social or political duty but may not have been reckoned as religious worship. This brings us almost to the point at which we must consider the perceived function and purposes of sacrifices, but before we move into that material, we briefly highlight two situations in which ambiguity surrounded not only the divine-human continuum but also the worship-honour continuum.

The decree and letter of Tiberius recorded in *SEG* xi. 922-3 and originating from Gytheum in 15 C.E., included sacrifices, followed by six days of celebration, each dedicated to a particular imperial figure, though only Caesar Augustus is called 'son of a god'. These days are described as "the days of the gods and principes" followed by two more days of theatrical performances in memory of a benefactor. In line 6 the sacrifice is for the safety of the principes but in line 29 it is for the safety of the principes *and* gods. The decree fails however to specify to whom these sacrifices were actually offered. The letter of response from Tiberius Caesar Augustus commends the people for showing "piety

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<sup>71</sup> Other examples which display profound ambiguity, but for which lack of space precludes detailed presentation, were the ones consulted in *IGR* iv.1608; *SEG* iv. 521, line 1-3, *SIG* 820; *IG* 7.2712; *SEG* 25: 680 with reference to the joint receipt of sacrifices by gods and emperors. In some cases two sacrifices were needed to take account of the ambiguity - *SEG*. ix.5; *SIG*. 611; *IG* VII 413; *IG* II, 2, 1330; *OGIS*, 332. In Aristides, *Oration* 26, 32: *Rome*, people pray to the gods on a ruler's behalf *and* on personal matters to the ruler himself.

towards my father” - εἰς εὐσέβειαν μὲν τοῦ ἔμοῦ πατρός - and “honour towards us” - τιμὴν δὲ ἡμετέραν. (Line 16 of letter). The context seems to be one of gratitude and great respect rather than worship as such and this is further strengthened by Tiberius’ differentiation between the huge honours deserved by his father Augustus - ‘fit for gods’ (τὰς θεοῖς πρέπουσας τιμὰς) - and those of a human sort (ἀνθρωπείους) which Tiberius felt more appropriate for himself. Similarly in *ILS*, 8792 dated 37 C.E. from Acraephia (Boeotia) Gaius thanks the league of Achaeans for their ‘zeal’ and ‘piety’ - προθυμίας καὶ εὐσεβείας (line 25). He thanks them for sacrificing for his welfare and giving him the greatest honours. He also asks them for reasons of cost greatly to reduce the number of statues dedicated to him. (Line 30). Once again the actual intended destination of the sacrifices is not specified in the letter and the terms employed appear to revolve around honour, respect, gratitude and commemoration rather than actual worship. We must therefore now attempt the necessary but daunting task of tracing just what the Greco-Roman world felt it was doing when it made sacrificial offerings, and whether or not such acts did in any sense constitute the sort of religious worship and idolatry with which Paul was so concerned in his letter.

## 5.7 SOME PERCEPTIONS OF THE PURPOSE, FUNCTION AND MEANING OF GRECO-ROMAN SACRIFICES

Our brief consideration of the term *thusia* led us to conclude that it constituted a phenomenon both ‘sacred’ and ‘secular’ - indeed that it superseded those two categories - and thus it will not be surprising to discover that a broad range of perspectives existed regarding the perceived significance of such sacrifices. That spectrum of opinion will be our focus in this section.

### 5.7.1 SACRIFICE AS MEANS OF ESTABLISHING RELATIONSHIP WITH, AND INVOKING RESPONSE FROM, SUPERNATURAL POWERS: THE DIVINE DIMENSION<sup>72</sup>

A considerable number of ancient texts indicate that offerings were directed to gods both in the expectation that something would happen and in response to something

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<sup>72</sup> The sheer range and immense variety of situations in which a *thusia* might be offered can be seen from the following sources which we examined: as thanksgiving for safety at sea (*Od.* iii. 179, Juvenal *Sat.* 12, 1-12); in anticipation of offering thanks for safe travel (Apollonius Rhodius *Arg.* ii. 685-719; escape from a falling tree (Horace Bk. 3, Ode 8); safe return from journeys (Horace Ode 1. 36 lines 1-6 and Ode 2.7 lines 17-18); as accompanying an oath (*The Iliad* iii, 103-6); the casting of lots for cities (Apollodorus, *The Library* II. 8.4) and the consultation of an oracle (Plutarch, *Lycurgus* 5.3); before making a journey (*Od.* X. 518-540 - offerings to the dead and underworld gods, *Od.* 13. 24-8, and *The Iliad* II.305-7); averting imminent danger in the form of punishment from Poseidon (*Od.* 13.172-187) and supplication for rain (Paus. 8.38.4) Cf. Also a celebration of the fall of Cleopatra in which couches of the gods are decked with feast. (Horace *Ode* 1.37 lines 1-4).

which had indeed already happened. Around 217 B.C.E., for example, the dictator Quintus Fabius Maximus in a period of military campaign, discovered that a vow made to Mars concerning the war had not been duly performed and required repetition. It was agreed that if they were victorious, then a *lectisternium* should be offered. This involved a feast in which images of the gods reclined on couches with food set out before them. The 12 great Olympian gods thus reclined in pairs on six couches, making their first appearance together in Roman history. Unfortunately Livy<sup>73</sup> provides no further details of this sacrifice, though it is interesting to note that this major sacrifice was conditional on military success. In *ILS 5050* (17 B.C.E.), already noted in the previous section, we observe that Caesar Augustus made offerings to Roman divinities in a Greek manner in order to request for the Roman people a range of blessings - 'prosperity', 'increase of majesty for the Romans', 'protection', 'eternal safety', 'victory', 'health', 'favour', 'keep safe the legions' and 'be well-disposed and propitious to the Romans'. It appears therefore that many ancients did believe that in some way a sacrifice was required in order to secure the blessings of the gods. A priest of Zeus was even ready to offer oxen to Paul and Barnabas (Acts 14:13) imagining them to be gods. Thus among some, there appears to have existed the unstated assumption that the gods needed or at least enjoyed animal sacrifices.

A key ingredient in the reciprocal relationship between gods and humans was through the thanksgiving function played by sacrificial offerings. Those who failed to give thanks and honour to the gods risked reprisal and loss. Although a later writer, Porphyry based his 3rd century C.E. work *On Abstinence*<sup>74</sup> on Theophrastus' 3rd century B.C.E. *On Piety*. He offers three reasons for sacrificing to the gods - ἢ γὰρ διὰ τιμὴν ἢ διὰ χάριν ἢ διὰ χρεῖαν τῶν ἀγαθῶν. This we render either 'to show them honour, or to offer them thanks or because of a need to receive good things'. In previous sections we have seen evidence of thanksgiving as a factor underlying sacrifices, so we shall not present further detailed examples here.<sup>75</sup> Admittedly the gods received only meagre portions and as we shall shortly see, this aroused the cynicism of some authors. Nevertheless some scholars believe that the Homeric period practice of offering tiny parts of a victim<sup>76</sup> to the gods, whilst being uncertain for the post-Homeric period, did in fact symbolize for most Greeks the offering of the whole animal. The key issue of whether

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<sup>73</sup> See Livy 22.9.10 Tr. B.O. Foster. LCL 1963 p.231.

<sup>74</sup> Greek Text was seen in Porphyre *De L'Abstinence* Livre II, 24. J. Bouffartigue and M. Patillon. Collection des Universités de France, Paris, 1979.

<sup>75</sup> Situations of sacrifice and meals in the context of thanksgiving were also studied in Polybius *Hist.* Bk. 4.73.3 and Bk. 5.15.8 (military campaigns), as also in Diodorus of Sicily 20.76. See also the idea of bringing pleasure to the goddess (*Od.* III.435-40) or the god (*ibid.* Line 474).

<sup>76</sup> M.H. Jameson 'Sacrifice', 1988: 970-1 holds this view though not dogmatically. Farnell *ERE* 1920 suggests the possibility, though not the certainty, that the burning of hair prior to burning *may* reflect the law that the sanctification of the part means the sanctification of the whole.

communally eaten food classified as sacrificial or not thus remains unclear and therefore as in Toraja today, potentially ambiguous for participants.

In addition to the expression of thanks, sacrifice also had a number of specific functions in its orientation to the supernatural. For example, we have evidence of a sacrifice from Hadrian's reign, dated 29th May 118 C.E. in which Marcus Valerius Trebicius Decianus burnt two sows on an altar as expiation for pollution caused by the cutting down of trees.<sup>77</sup> He offered on the sacrificial hearth of Dea Dia a white cow as a freewill offering in her honour. It is then stated that the priests sat down in the hall and ate a meal from the sacrifice in a reclining position. This suggests at least the possibility that some meals consisted of priests/officiants only and in such a situation, the consumed meat may have originated in one sacrificial animal only. Purification was needed as a result of pollution incurred by birth, death, disease and sex, and Polybius 4.21.8-9 records a case of sacrifice offered in order to restore a community following a bloody massacre. Sacrificial acts were performed in order to divine favourable omens, for example, prior to battles, as in the case of Hannibal (Polybius 3.11.5) and Philip of Macedon (Polybius 7.12.1). Such actions, along with oath taking could involve the holding (Herodotus 6.67-8) and/or tasting of animal innards. Purification and protection were sought through the Roman rite of *lustratio*, such as that in Cato *de Agric.*, 141. The Romans developed an organized State system for appeasing spiritual beings; sacrifice thus constituted a duty to the State authorities rather than merely an offering to a particular deity. The multi-dimensional nature of sacrifice thus begins to show itself. It was not merely 'religious' but could also constitute a political responsibility and duty.

We have established already that the term *thusia* had a broad frame of reference in the ancient world and was used not only in the more obvious orientation towards divinities but also in the more ambiguous realm of honouring the living and the dead. Polybius, writing in the second century B.C.E., for example, describes the reaction of the inhabitants of towns captured by Ptolemy Philopater. They honoured him - *τιμῶντες* - with crowns, *θυσίαις* and altars (Polybius 5. 86.11). King Attalus helped the Sicyonians to erect a statue of himself next to that of Apollo in their market place. An annual *thusia* was to be made to him. (Polybius 5. Fragment of Bk.18.16.3). A chief elder of Achaea, Aratus, died and *θυσίαις* and *τιμᾶς* were offered to him as to a hero. (Polybius 3. Fragment of Bk.8.12.8). The impression with these expressions of *thusiai* is predominantly one of honour and respect, rather than worship. The occurrence of the word *thusia*, as we have consistently argued, cannot automatically be attached to a function traditionally associated with Olympian divinities only. As we have already observed also, the world of the dead was of great significance to Greeks and Romans. *The Iliad* Bk.23 relates the cremation of Patroclus, and although we are given no details of a subsequent feast, we do know firstly

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<sup>77</sup> See Guil. Henzen *Acta Fratrum Arvalium* p.152f. I. Lines 58-66 and II Lines 1-10 (Hadrian's reign), 1874.

that sheep and cattle were sacrificed in large numbers, secondly that the offerings were seen as accompanying the dead chief on his journey to the other world, as in the modern Torajanese situation, and thirdly that major athletic games followed this funeral, including boxing, wrestling and running. Funeral games were the norm in Homer's world and beyond, and it is reasonable to assume that large-scale dining must have occurred. Indeed Athenaeus' *The Deipnosophists* 149c. describes sacrifices to the dead at a huge Arcadian funeral, followed by a large feast. This included a *trapeza* or table of Zeus, god of strangers. An incident recorded by Herodotus 5, 92 deals with Periander's harsh treatment of the people of Corinth. His wife Melissa had been killed and Periander tried to consult her regarding the location of a deposit left by a friend. Periander had failed to burn his wife's clothing so now she was cold and naked. Melissa offered the necessary information about the deposit only when Periander burned all the clothing of Corinth's women. Clearly in Corinth there existed the real belief that the dead were able to exercise power over the living in response to a sacrifice. Such belief dies out only very slowly, if at all, as we saw in the case-study of the Torajanese Church in Indonesia.

Finally we must give consideration to one other area which has engaged biblical scholarship and which we argue has led to widespread but weak thinking, namely, sacramental communion. L.R. Farnell has argued that although there is no evidence of bloodless offerings being consumed by worshippers in ordinary public cults as a sacramental meal, nevertheless in Homer's time, animal sacrifices at an altar brought together the victim and the divine spirit. The result of this meeting was that the victim became the temporary incarnation of the deity such that anyone who ate it was brought thereby into mystic fellowship or communion with their deity "however faintly this may have been realized by the poet [Homer] and his contemporaries." ('Sacrificial Communion' 1903-4 pp.319-321 and 'Sacrifice' in *ERE* 1920). Farnell claims that this idea also accounts for the tasting of the *splanchna* before the communal feast begins. As examples, he cites Dionysiac ritual and the Bouphonia ritual at Athens, at which the spirit of Zeus was felt to become temporarily incarnate in the bull so that anyone who ate the meat came into communion with the god. (*ERE*: 1920 'Sacrifice' S.V.). He argues that this might explain the occasional regulations in State sacrifices which forbade this flesh from being eaten away from the sanctuary i.e. away from the sanctifying effects of the actual altar. Farnell concludes his work by noting that the late writer of Greek paganism, Iamblichus, in his work *De Mysteriis* 5, 9, rejects the idea that sacrifice was a gift which could bribe God but accepts offerings as a sign of friendship between mortal and the deity. Farnell then admits that "...neither he [Iamblichus] nor any other Greek theorist appears cognizant of the idea of sacramental communion." (*ERE*: 1920). Farnell nevertheless argues (1903-4: 321) that the idea of sacramental communion was familiar to Greek worshippers in the state-religion "... though it may not have always been clearly articulated, nor assigned so prominent a place as it has been in the Churches of Christendom."

We contend that Farnell's reasoning has major weaknesses, however. Yerkes has shown more recently that the Bouphonia rite was ancient, named no god, made no prayer, offered no libation and burnt no animal offering on the altar. Animal slaying was thus purely for the sake of the meal and had "no significance in itself." (1953: 79). Gill is willing to accept that the Greek *thusia* sometimes involved conscious fellowship with the god and sometimes, and particularly so in later times like Plutarch's, was a merely divinely-blest human table fellowship between participating people ('*Trapezomata*' 1974: 137). Plutarch, referring to Hesiod's *Works and Days* 748-9, does indeed comment on tables spread for a god. (Fragment 95). He claims that worshippers made an offering of food from this table, which act rendered holy the consumed food. The actual nature of this consumed food - whether sacrificial or not - is left somewhat ambiguous, however. The ambiguous component must have increased in the early Christian centuries when it appears that, at many festivals, large numbers of people attended and required to be fed. Small sacrificial portions would not have been sufficient to cater for such numbers. Gill argues however that in the later period "the god is more in the background, more a spectator at than a partaker in the sacral banquet." (1974:137). Across the broad spectrum of ancient material which we have examined in the course of our research, none of the available evidence supports the idea of sacrificial function as that of worshippers sharing 'communion' in the god in the sense of 'eating' him, yet such a view is often assumed as being the pagan background to 1 Cor.10 and that in spite of Paul's own clear acknowledgement of the essential neutrality of food in 1 Cor.8:8. Indeed, on the contrary, the evidence seen already, and forthcoming in Sections 5.8 and 5.9, indicates the basic incompatibility of the god being host or fellow-guest and yet at the same time being the very meal itself. Thus we emphasize that fellowship *with* a god envisages the deity as *host* or *fellow-guest* (or both), but not as victim/food. We shall see again in Chapter 6 that scholars who have seriously studied background invariably have seen the flaws, misconceptions and sheer speculations of people like Farnell regarding sacramental communion. This emerging consensus among classicists in particular does not however appear to have found acceptance among most N.T. scholars.<sup>78</sup>

### 5.7.2 SACRIFICE AS MEANS OF EXECUTING SOCIO-POLITICAL FUNCTIONS: THE HUMAN DIMENSION

The idea that sacrifice - the offering of food portions to supernatural beings i.e. an essentially divinely oriented activity - could fulfil 'non-religious' functions, might at first

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<sup>78</sup> An exception to this is the work of Rev. Dr. Pandang Yamsat. "The *Ekklesia* as Partnership: Paul and Threats to *koinonia* in 1 Corinthians" Ph.D. Thesis. Univ. of Sheffield 1992 p.247. In his thesis Yamsat notes that in cultic festivities there was *koinonia* with the god as partner at the meal, rather than *koinonia* in the god as the object shared among the worshippers. J.D.G. Dunn likewise argues that in 1 Cor.10, Paul is thinking of fellowship or partnership, not consumption of a deity - see *Unity and Diversity in the N.T.* SCM Press Ltd. (1977) pp.164-5. The opposite viewpoint which dwells on sacramental communion pervades the word study articles on *koinonia* by Friedrich Hauck in *TDNT* Ed. G. Kittel. (1965). Vol. III. S.V.



sight seem to be virtually a contradiction in terms. Yet it is in such a direction that K. Meuli (1945: 282) has challenged scholarship regarding the function of Greek sacrifice. His ideas merit further consideration and investigation by scholars. As we have already noted, Meuli saw the 'prototype', as it were, of food sacrifices in the cult of the dead which involved nourishing the dead either by a simple offering to the dead or by a funerary meal shared by living and dead. This pattern, he believes, passed from the cult of dead family into the hero-cult and then into the cult of the gods, in which the god could be installed on a *kline* or 'couch'. He also traces 'annihilation sacrifices' to the cult of the dead. For example in Herod. 5, 92.2ff. the dead man *and* his material objects were both burnt. Meuli interprets such an act not so much as an offering to the dead but rather as a demonstration of grief at the death.<sup>79</sup> Meuli also criticizes the idea of the Olympian shared meal between gods and people on the grounds that the gods received such meagre and inferior portions. He therefore argued that the offering must have been secondary, and that rather than functioning as an offering, it performed the role of restoring to the animal what was necessary for the renewal of its life, based on the rituals of hunting-people. Detailed work on such theories lies beyond the scope of our present research, but Meuli at least opens our minds to the possibility that sacrifice involved dimensions other than the vertical, divinely oriented one. A.D. Nock in fact has underscored the horizontal dimension of sacrifice in his article "Cult of Heroes" 1944 (in *Essays* 1972). He argues against the notion that the Greeks enjoyed conscious table fellowship with the supernatural and argues in favour of the idea that sacrifice was primarily a matter of gift, first fruits or tribute. (1972: 583). Even more so with regard to the Romans, Nock contends that any concept of table fellowship through sacrifice is completely without foundation - "Participation was between the men concerned, as in *confarreatio*, which made a bond that was hallowed by deep religious sentiment and sanction. The relation of those who met to do sacrifice was to one another and not to the gods - in fact, a personal relationship, other than one of dependence and gratitude, to a *numen*, is barely thinkable." (1972: 587). Nock then takes this a stage further by asserting that, at least for many Roman sacrifices, the actual communal meal was treated as ordinary food for human consumption. In other words, some may well have considered Roman sacrifices as having a real social dimension and even more so when it came to the communal meal itself. Indeed we shall now develop our argument that when people offered sacrifice, they were not by any means inevitably involved in 'religious worship'. In other words, sacrifice, and

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<sup>79</sup> Such a view might be comparable in some sense with the view of many Torajanese Christians that food offered and eaten at funerals today is an expression of grief, honour, respect and concern for the bereaved family rather than an offering to the departed soul. G.B. Caird's statement is as true for modern Toraja as it is for ancient Greece - "the boundary line between the human and the divine had always been a shadowy one." *The Apostolic Age* E. Duckworth & Co. Ltd. 1955 p.17. The essential ambiguity of the issue is reflected by L. Bruit and P. Schmitt Pantel *Religion in the Ancient Greek City* 1995:29 - who argue that in ancient Greek cities, the bloody animal sacrifice "simultaneously gave expression to the bonds that tied the citizens one to another and served as a privileged means of communication with the divine world." Once more, social and religious functions were inseparable.

even more so in the case of communal meals, carried multi-functional significance which lent itself to multiple interpretation and viewpoint.

We have indicated in Section 5.7.1 that circumstances arose in which oaths were taken but although the supernatural was invoked, it was as witness to the oath or treaty. In other words, the emphasis was not primarily on relations between gods and humans, and in some cases the actual naming of gods was not significant and could even be omitted altogether. Whether or not such transactions actually constituted 'worship' presumably would have been open to debate. That the partaking of sacrificial offerings created a sense of community is suggested by Aristophanes' comedy *Wasps*, 654, in which Philocleon indicates that the pollution caused by homicide would be sufficient to exclude him permanently from sharing in the *splanchna*. The sacrificial offering thus appears to have fulfilled a socializing dimension among Greeks. In the 4th century B.C.E., Xenophon wrote *Oeconomicus* (*A Discussion on Estate Management*) in which Ischomachus defends his desire to be rich and well-endowed with possessions. He tells Socrates (11.8-9) that his motives in such a longing would be to honour the gods, help needy friends, benefit the city and gain the respect and honour of his fellow-citizens. As in Torajaland today, the rich had the means to make sacrifices on a scale which yielded considerable social benefits. Sacrificial offerings thus involved a very real social dimension.

In the Homeric material which we have thus far considered, a high degree of emphasis appears to have been placed on the carrying out of the sacrifice itself but when we consider later inscriptional evidence of the last two centuries B.C.E., there appears to be a heightened stress on the meal itself.<sup>80</sup> For example, an inscription from Tlos dated around 100 B.C.E. lays great and repeated stress on the consumption of the food.<sup>81</sup> Another inscription dated 130 B.C.E., even stated that those absent from a feast honouring the 5th century B.C.E. Athenian comic poet Archippus were allowed to receive money in place of the sacrificial food they had missed.<sup>82</sup> We would not be on safe ground here if we tried to argue for the increasing 'secularization' of sacrifices, but what we do claim is that the *religious* significance of sacrifices was not always distinct or uppermost in the ancient mind.

Not only was this the case in Greek religion but it extended also to Roman practice in which the imperial priest held the dual responsibility of showing piety toward the emperor (vertical orientation) *and* at the same time liberal generosity toward the populace (horizontal orientation). An example of such roles is that of Cleanax, son of Sarapion,

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<sup>80</sup> Price *Rituals* 1984: 229 has argued that during this period, there was a decline in the religious significance of sacrifices, though he immediately, and rightly, adds the point that banquets could not be described as 'secular'. In any case, as we have seen, *thusia* constituted a single Greek semantic field which defied division into 'religious' and 'secular'.

<sup>81</sup> *Tituli Asiae Minoris* Vol. II Fasc. 1 No. 548b Vindobonae 1920 p.206-7.

<sup>82</sup> *Die Inschriften von Kyme* No. 13 Honours for Archippus Lines No.47 and 73f. Rudolf Habelt Verlag GMBH, Bonn, 1976.

from stele evidence on the occasion of his departure from the office of *prytanis* in *Aeolis*, Kyme<sup>83</sup> on the seaboard of Asia Minor, not far from the mouth of the Hermus, and dated probably between 2 B.C.E. and 2 C.E. As priest of Dionysus Pandamos and celebrant of the Mysteries, he paid all the expenses (lines 12-16) and thereby showed his love of honour gained through generosity (*philodoxia*) and his respect for the worship of the gods (*eusebeia*). Lines 16-19 state that he invited the citizens, the Roman community, the dependent population that worked the land (*paroikoi*) and the foreigners to an annual feast in the sanctuary of Dionysus. Cleanax paid all the expenses himself but made sure this was widely known, sacrificing to the gods and entertaining lavishly for several days in the *prytaneum* or civic hall (lines 30-34). During an imperial festival he also sacrificed to Caesar Augustus, his sons Gaius and Lucius Caesar and to the other gods (*theoisi*), followed by a market place feast. (lines 40-45). What emerges from such evidence is the fundamental inseparability of civic and religious functions. Emperors and prominent members of the élite offered sacrifice and in so doing granted real benefits to the people. In return they received honour from the people, which reinforced their dominant position. The dominance of the gods, their provision for the people and the dependence of the people on the gods were mirrored by the comparable relationship between élite and people, so that in this way the power and wealth of the élite were maintained.<sup>84</sup> Sacrificial practice by the Roman élite thus had a very real socio-political function which must have complicated and widened popular perceptions of it and made even more difficult any attempt to define the boundaries of, and place of sacrifice in, 'worship' in a Roman colony such as Corinth.

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<sup>83</sup> See stele evidence published by R. Hodot in *J. Paul Getty Museum Journal* No.10 (1982) pp.165-80 and available, with French commentary in J. and L. Robert "Bulletin Epigraphique" No. 323 in *Revue des Études Grecques Tome 96*, Paris, 1983 pp.132-8. The use of the term *eusebeia* was yet another case of ambivalence in terms of what it actually signified in relation to worship, because this term could also be used of human family and friends, as in the following inscriptions which we examined - *SIG* 798 lines 24-5 (37 B.C.E.); *SIG* 1107 lines 20-25 (200 B.C.E.) and *LSCG Supp.* 126 (line 10).

<sup>84</sup> Evidence for the increasing focus on the Emperor as sacrificant, rather than on the sacrifice itself, is put forward by R. Gordon who passes comment on the sacrificial relief of Trajan to which we referred in footnote 51. Gordon believes that the focus is on the emperor as sacrificant and he goes on to claim that only one surviving official Roman relief shows a liver being inspected by haruspices and not a single relief shows the virtual consumption of internal organs by the participant members of the sacerdotal colleges. The stress was on the Emperor and his generosity to the people, as example to be followed by the élite. See R. Gordon "The Veil of Power: emperors, sacrificers and benefactors" in *Pagan Priests: Religion and Power in the Ancient World*. Eds. Mary Beard and John North. Duckworth (1990) pp.203-4 and 223-4. The political function of sacrifice in Greek cities has similarly been observed by M. Detienne and J-P. Vernant *La Cuisine du sacrifice en pays grec*. (1979) in which they argue that the importance of sacrifice is derived from a particular function - "l'exercice du rapport social, à tous les niveaux du politique, à l'intérieur du système que les Grecs appellent  *cité* . Aucun pouvoir politique ne peut s'exercer sans pratique sacrificielle." My translation "the exercise of social relatedness on all *political* levels within the system the Greeks call *the city*. Political power cannot be exercised without sacrificial practice." (1979: 10).

### 5.7.3 SACRIFICE AS MEANS OF EXPRESSING CUSTOM AND TRADITION: THE HABITUAL DIMENSION

In a real sense, Herodotus writing in the fifth century B.C.E. sets out a pattern of thought which became more and more widely represented in the literary circles of the early Christian centuries. Herodotus describes the criticism levelled by Persians at the Greek conceptualization of their gods in the likeness of humans which results in the making of statues, temples and altars.<sup>85</sup> This, in Persian eyes, constituted foolishness. Nevertheless Persians called the whole circle of heaven Zeus and made sacrifices to Zeus on mountain tops. It was possible to criticize the ritual of others and yet to continue to practise sacrificial ritual oneself. This became a recurring theme of later writers, as also did the idea that the gods actually did not need material things in any case. This latter theme is clear in Plato's *Euthyphro* in which Euthyphro<sup>86</sup> and Socrates agree that what the gods would value more would be honour, praise, gratitude and holiness, though they fail to come to a definition of the latter item. A further attitude to sacrifices is that displayed probably by an Epicurean philosopher - perhaps the 4th/3rd century B.C.E. Epicurus himself - which appears in a fragment whose date was not later than the first century B.C.E. In this work (*P. Oxy. 215*), the writer allows his followers to make sacrifices but warns them not to fear the gods or to expect that sacrifices will procure the favour of the gods. (Col. II Lines 8-19). The themes that sacrifice is not needed by the gods, that alternative human responses are valued by the gods but that sacrifice may nevertheless be indulged in, appear to have been a trio which emerged repeatedly in the work of later writers and it is to a selection of these that we now turn.

A similar line to that of Epicurus was that taken by Seneca<sup>87</sup> who having ridiculed the image ritual on the Capitoline, nevertheless advises that the wise man should go through with sacred rites but ought not to make them a part of his personal religion -

A wise man will observe them [sacred rites] as they are prescribed by law,  
but not as something pleasing to the gods.

Seneca, writing around the mid first century C.E. then makes a statement which, if modified, might well have been the sort of perspective to be encountered in the Corinthian Church - "All this ignoble crowd of gods, which the superstition of ages has gathered together, we ought to adore, but in such a way as to remember all the while that their worship belongs to custom rather than to reality." The point is not that sacrifices are *totally* unnecessary but rather that in and of themselves, the sacrifice is not the most

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<sup>85</sup> See Herodotus Bk. 1.131 Translation by A.D. Godley, LCL 1920.

<sup>86</sup> Plato *Euthyphro* 14B - 15E Tr. H.N. Fowler. LCL 1919.

<sup>87</sup> Seneca's work *On Superstition* has been lost but one fragment has been preserved in Augustine's *City of God* Bk. VI Ch.10. Tr. W.M. Green, LCL. 1963. Tertullian also refers in *Apology* 12 to Seneca's lost work.

important thing. Right attitudes are central in any approaches to the gods and Seneca himself contends that real honours to the gods do not consist of impressive-looking sacrifices but rather in the “upright and holy desire of the worshippers.”<sup>88</sup> This sentiment is clearly visible also in Dio Chrysostom’s *Discourse* 31.15 in which Dio spotlights a right spirit as being far superior in importance to the actual technicalities of libation, incense or degree of approach. He even questions whether deity needs images or sacrifices and yet, in line with other writers, he advocates the continuance of such ritual as a demonstration of zeal for the gods.

Having seen a degree of uniformity of attitude to sacrifice among these writers, we note now a diversity of viewpoint from other authors in the early Christian period. Pliny wrote to the Emperor Trajan concerning how to treat Christians who were influencing society. Pliny however was encouraged to observe that large numbers of people were returning to the temples and were reviving pagan cultic ritual practices. Sacrifice is presented by Pliny as a fluctuating trend or tradition and Pliny feels optimistic that given an opportunity to repent, many Christians could be persuaded to desert their faith and adhere to the worship of the gods and the emperor.<sup>89</sup> Pliny thus saw sacrificial acts as a convenient way of demonstrating Christians’ rejection of their faith. Plutarch describes the strange way in which people fear and hate the gods and yet at the same time sacrifice offerings to them.<sup>90</sup> Writing around the end of the first century C.E., Plutarch could also however express the view that the idea of a great and majestic god ought to be promoted by generous giving to public worship of the gods.<sup>91</sup> He even explains elsewhere that in spite of Epicurean accusations that the superstitious attend sacrifices and feasts out of fear, yet on the contrary Plutarch says that such attendance in the presence of the god is meaningful, not because of the food and drink but because of the divine influence that is both present and felt.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> See Seneca *Moral Essays* ‘On Benefits’ 1.6.3 Tr. J.W. Basore. LCL 1975. The same sort of sentiments were found to have been clearly expressed in the works of Horace *Odes* Bk. III, No. 23, Cicero, *De Natura Deorum* II. 28.71 and particularly emphasized in Dio Chrysostom *Discourse* 13.35 and 33.28. See also Xen. *Mem.* 1.3.3.

<sup>89</sup> See Pliny *Letters* Bk. X, 96.10. Tr. B. Radice. LCL 1969.

<sup>90</sup> See Plutarch *Moralia, On Superstition* 170E Tr. F.C. Babbitt LCL 1928.

<sup>91</sup> Plutarch *Moralia, Precepts of Statecraft* 822B. Tr. H.N. Fowler. LCL 1936.

<sup>92</sup> See Plutarch *Moralia, That Epicurus Actually Makes a Pleasant Life Impossible* 1101E-1102C. Tr. B. Einarson and P.H. De Lacy. LCL 1967. Plutarch (1102B) is very critical of Epicurus’ frequent but hypocritical attendance at, and participation in, religious festivals - “For out of fear of public opinion he goes through a mummery of prayers and obeisances that he has no use for and pronounces words that run counter to his philosophy; when he sacrifices, the priest at his side who immolates the victim is to him a butcher; and when it is over he goes away with Menander’s words on his lips [Frag. 750]: ‘I sacrificed to gods who heed me not’.”

Whereas other writers pointed out that the gods actually had no need of sacrificial offerings, the second century C.E. rhetorician Lucian<sup>93</sup> described such sacrificial acts as foolish, laughable and insulting to the gods. Lucian continues in Sections 8 and 9 of his work to paint a picture of gods in heaven opening their mouths to receive offerings. He then ridicules those who offer victims only to get them back and who select the best animal so that it is most useful to them. (Sections 12-13). His final verdict on the ritual acts he describes is in Section 15 -

Actions and beliefs like these on the part of the public seem to me to require, not someone to censure them, but a Heracleitus or Democritus, the one to laugh at their ignorance, the other to bewail their folly.

Such an enormous range of opinion concerning the nature and function of sacrifices yielded a highly complex spectrum which, combined with complexity over the divine/human recipient issue, produced many different perspectives on, and interpretations of, the boundaries between worship, honour, respect, reverence and loyalty. In all of this, of course, we are very largely compelled to hear the voice of the minority literary and philosophical classes. In Toraja some people explained sacrifice as a manifestation of the principle *do ut des* 'give in order to receive' but the reality is that for many participants, ritual sacrifice was a mindless activity - an unthinking and unquestioned routine in which little, if any, attention actually was focussed on the object of worship or the function and meaning of the ceremony. Seneca's comment on Jewish rites would certainly be true of the modern Torajanese situation and was probably true of the pagan ritual of first century C.E. Corinth - "The greater part of the people go through a ritual not knowing why they do so."<sup>94</sup> This has ever been the case. Thinking and analysis generally begin only when an outsider, be it Paul or the modern missionary, engages such a ritual system with a different 'mind set'. It remains now to be seen whether communal meals themselves were liable to multiple perspectives and interpretation based on the existence of that complex three-fold dynamic of ambiguity, boundary and conceptualization.

## 5.8 THE FORM AND ORGANIZATION OF COMMUNAL MEALS

### 5.8.1 INTRODUCTION

We shall continue to argue that for the realm of cultic, communal meals, as with the images and sacrifices already considered, there existed such ambiguity, such lack of boundary lines and such variation regarding the perceived nature of divinity and humanity

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<sup>93</sup> Lucian *On Sacrifices* 8-15 Tr. A.M. Harmon. LCL 1921. For a similarly cynical view of sacrifice, see Menander's play *Dyskolos* Lines 447-554 (Tr. W.G. Arnott LCL 1979) performed in 316 B.C.E. Knemon sees a crowd heading for the shrine of Pan and the Nymphs and delivers the following outburst of criticism - "Look how the devils sacrifice. They bring hampers and wine-jars, not to please the gods, but their own guts. Their piety extends to incense and the cake - that's all put on the fire, the god can take that. And they serve the gods with tail-bone and gall-bladder, just because men can't eat them. The rest they guzzle down themselves..." In sharp contrast to this, however, is Hesiod's *Works and Days* 755f. in which there is condemnation for those who criticize the wasteful burning of sacrifices to the gods.

<sup>94</sup> Seneca in Augustine, *City of God* Bk. VI, 11 Tr. W.M. Green. LCL 1963.

that it was feasible to give a whole range of valid answers<sup>95</sup> to two fundamental and interrelated questions, namely “what actually constitutes ‘idolatrous worship?’” and “how far can Christians reasonably participate in such cult?” The very fact that different, yet viable, answers could be given to those two questions is the reason why Paul had to write at such length in 1 Cor.8-10 and at the same time is the reason why the whole debate remains unresolved at the close of the 20th century in the life of the wider Church. The multitude of viewpoints concerning communal meals is undoubtedly and inextricably related to the wide variety of people attending and participating in such meals and to the broad mix of reasons which motivated that attendance and participation. This growing complexity can be seen clearly in two of the Discourses written by Dio Chrysostom in the latter part of the first century C.E.<sup>96</sup> In his 8th Discourse, Dio relates the tale of the exiled 4th century B.C.E. founder of the Cynic sect, Diogenes, symbolizing Dio himself, who visited the Isthmian Games near Corinth to study human behaviour. Dio is cynical about the Sophists who shouted abuse at one another whilst their disciples fought each other, and he reports something of the sheer breadth of activity that accompanied the games - poetry recital, juggling tricks, fortune-telling and the peddling of goods. (8.9). Dio notes that no Corinthian was willing to listen to Diogenes since they saw him daily in Corinth itself (8.10). Interestingly, and in a sense similar to Paul’s words in 1 Cor.9:24-27, Diogenes spoke about the noble man as one who endured hardship to win not a sprig of parsley (worn by victors at Isthmian and Nemean games) nor pine (Isthmian Games) but rather to win “happiness and virtue throughout all the days of his life.” (8.15). As we noted at the end of Section 5.7.3 very few participants probably gave any detailed thought to the significance of the image, the sacrifice or the communal meal, for as Dio concludes in his 9th Discourse on the Isthmian Games, the vast majority of those attending, did so for two reasons - to watch the athletes and to indulge in bouts of voracious eating.<sup>97</sup> (9.1).

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<sup>95</sup> One scholar who has recently recognized the complexity of this issue is P. Borgen (‘Yes, No, How Far?’ 1994: 32) who noted the difficulty of separating pagan from Judeo-Christian worship in the Roman world - “Thus the attitudes both among Jews and Christians varied along a wide scale, from different forms of participation to strict isolation. The question of how far one might go was a pressing one in the daily life of many.” The problem was no doubt compounded by the trend through the last two centuries B.C.E., claimed by Price (*Rituals* 1984: 229), in which for both Greek and Roman imperial feasts, the class of beneficiaries gradually became wider and wider to include women and non-citizens, thereby evoking an increasingly broad spectrum of interpretation and viewpoint.

<sup>96</sup> Dio Chrysostom *Discourse 8, Diogenes or on virtue* and *Discourse 27, A Short Talk on What Takes Place at a Symposium* Tr. J.W. Cohoon. LCL 1971 and 1977.

<sup>97</sup> Whilst some at Corinth appear to have taken the line that “Food will not commend us to God. We are no worse off if we do not eat, and no better off if we do” (1 Cor.8:8 RSV), implying that food *per se* was a neutral commodity, nevertheless the act of eating in community includes a social function within its highly complex dynamic. See for example M. Douglas *Implicit Meanings: Essays in Anthropology* Routledge and Kegan Paul, London and Boston (1975) p.249, together with Neyrey J.H. “Ceremonies in Luke-Acts: The Case of Meals and Table Fellowship” in J.H. Neyrey Ed. *The Social World of Luke-Acts: Models for Interpretation*. Hendrickson Publishers, Mass. 1991. Chapter 13 esp. p.375 and 386. See also M.N. Todd *Sidelights on Greek History*. Blackwell, Oxford 1932 pp.92-3 who also stresses the unity of the living and dead in the ritual of the Greek hero-cults.

Diogenes again condemns those who wear the victor's crown of pine without ever having overcome the real battles of life against anger, pain and desire. (9.10-13). Elsewhere, Dio notes that drinking followed eating at *symposia* and was intermingled with conversation, music, dancing, games and philosophical discussion. He maintains that some attend for the drinking (27.1) but that a whole range of activity and attitudes is represented - bad behaviour (27.2); stupid speeches and singing of various qualities (27.3); bad language and quarrelling (27.3); boring and irritating behaviour (27.3); sensible conversation (27.4). At national festivals, writes Dio, some view the sights and athletic contests (27.5), some buy and sell merchandise of all sorts (27.5-6), some read poetry (27.5-6), some come for a holiday break (27.6) but most come into the nuisance category of attenders (27.6). Very few, however, give serious attention to philosophers. (27.7-10). The range of motivations, and hence perspectives, was enormous, and this should be a warning to us not to fall into the trap of over-simplifying, and hence misunderstanding, the sheer complexity of the 'idol-food' issue at Corinth.

### 5.8.2 THE DIVISION AND DISTRIBUTION OF FOOD

Following the act of offering sacrifice performed by the priest or a limited number of sacrificants, but before the communal consumption of food by participants, there occurred the act of dividing up and distributing portions of food. Our findings in this regard appear to be broadly in line with the situation in Torajaland, namely that all guests were equal but some were more equal than others. Thus although Homer portrays most feast participants as receiving a fair share of food, nevertheless we note that in Herodotus 6.56 the Spartan kings were to receive special and generous sacrificial animal offerings, and in *Odyssey* 14.437, Odysseus as special guest receives the best part of the hog. At Roman meals, State banquets for all *ordines* allocated equal shares and writers advocated the importance of the demonstration of social equality during feasts.<sup>98</sup> On the other hand, however, abundant literary texts indicate that in the allocation of food portions, social discrimination clearly was practised. Suetonius *Domitian* 4.5 records that the emperor, during the course of the feast of the Seven Hills, distributed large baskets of food to the

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<sup>98</sup> See for example the evidence which we examined in Statius, *Silvae* 1.6.9-34; 1.6.43-5 and 1.6.46-50; Martial 8.50.1-10; Juvenal *Satire* 8.177-8; Plutarch *Marcus Cato* 25.2 and *Cato the Younger* 37.3-5; Seneca *Epist. Mor.* 19.10-11. Lucian in *Saturnalia* 13 and 17 gives detailed stipulations for the demonstration of equality. In doing so, he also indicates the large number of participants at such meals and the very wide range of social classes represented.



senate and knights and smaller ones to the commons.<sup>99</sup>

In a number of different ways, social distinctions and honours for guests, officials or benefactors were demonstrated through the distribution of special parts or extra portions. We have already noted that portions placed on the sacred tables and dedicated to the gods and heroes could then be taken back by the priests. At large feasts this must have meant that much of the consumed meat probably had never touched the table and as such may not strictly speaking have been 'sacrificed'. We know from Athenaeus 4.149D that at the municipal festivals of Pythian Apollo and Dionysus at Naucratis, double portions of wine and food were granted only to the priests of those deities.<sup>100</sup> An early third century B.C.E. Decree of Orgeones is recorded by Merritt ("Greek Inscriptions" No.55 in *Hesperia* 11). On certain occasions these citizens of Athens acted as priests in offering sacrifices, and in this particular cult of the hero Echelos (Lines 17-23), regulations for food shares were clearly stipulated. Each *orgeones* present received a full share and their sons a half share. A female attendant was given a half share. Thus the priestly function was rewarded in terms of specified food shares. An inscription from the early third century C.E. describing Sarapis worship in Karanis on the rim of the Fayyum depression is recorded in *P. Mich. Inv.4686*. A certain Ptolemaeus explains to his parents that he has taken up the office of *agoranomos* to avoid banquet charges. He then explains the positive consequence of this office - ἀλλὰ καὶ διπλᾶ μέρη λαμβάνω καὶ χορηγῶ αὐτοῖς ξύλα - "but also I receive double portions and I provide wood for them." (Lines 7-8). This *ραργῆς* also gives us a glimpse of the strong sense of obligation to attend cultic banquets. Indeed Ptolemaeus says that it is not feasible for a man to refuse to attend a Sarapis' banquet. (Lines 15-16). It is clear that special privileges attached to certain offices. One particular piece of evidence from Athens dated just prior to 178 C.E. records a meeting of the Iobakchoi who met in the name of Dionysos. (*LSCG* No.51). Lines 119-126 describe the sacrifice and drink offering to be made by the arch-Bakchos and the portions of sacrificial meat are distributed to Priest, vice-priest, arch-Bakchos, treasurer, the rustic performer, those who play the roles of Dionysos, Kore, Palaimon, Aphrodite and Proteurythmos, the first five names referring to names of club officers and the latter five to deities represented in roles played by members at the ritual. The sacrificial meat

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<sup>99</sup> Other examples of this sort of discrimination can be seen in Statius *Silv.* 1.6.28-30 and Pliny 2.6.2, as also in Plutarch *Moralia* 621E and 622B. The first century C.E. satirist, Martial, in *Epigram* Bk.3.60 notes a typical complaint about such social distinctions (Trans. D.R. Shackleton Bailey LCL 1993) - "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. You set to with turbot, I with bream. A golden turtle dove fills you up with its outside 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."

<sup>100</sup> For this type of arrangement, further evidence can be seen in *OGIS* 78 (221-205 B.C.E.); *SIG* 271, 921 and 1097.

was thus given to named participants in the cult, leaving uncertain the nature of the meat consumed by others who might have been present. This ritual was socio-religious in nature - πρὸς τοὺς θεοὺς καὶ τὸ βακχεῖον "in the service of the gods and our society", (Lines 56-58) and membership depended on a person making a drink-offering on admission, the sort of dilemma which must have faced Christian converts in Corinth and elsewhere. An interesting and potentially significant situation is revealed by *P. Mich. V.246* from the early first century C.E. Fifteen members of a guild of Hippocrates are assigned specific banquet places in order but only a single ἡγούμενος at the head of this list actually contributed sacrificial offerings, the rest making financial payments varying between 10 and 24 *drachmae*. We presume that these people participated in the banquet, in spite of not having directly contributed sacrificial food as such, a situation very similar to that encountered in some Torajanese banquets today. Whilst much of the evidence fails to answer our questions at the detailed level which we should like, nevertheless the complexity of the situation is apparent. Not all those present at a feast actually sacrificed; not all food at a feast actually was sacrificial. To compound the complexity even further, we have 5th century B.C.E. Greek *symposia* representations (BM. London E68) which show that a proportion of the male guests are not of the household but have travelled in, and the boots, walking sticks and baskets may indicate that these guests have brought food in from outside which presumably may not have been sacrificial at all. At the other extreme a translation<sup>101</sup> of Herondas' *Mimiambi* 4.86-95 includes Lines 94-95 as the words of the sacristan or custodian of the Asclepius temple -

Ho there! give me some of the holy bread, for the loss of this [?] is more serious to holy men than the loss of our portion.

These lines written in the 3rd century B.C.E. appear to suggest the possibility that different portions of food carried different religious value and potency.

Once the food had been divided and distributed, its normal fate appears to have been consumption within the immediate context of the feast. We know that in the cult of Asclepius, offerings were consumed entirely within the temple precinct at Corinth and Titane. (Paus. 2.27.1). That consumption was not always confined to the precincts is clear, however, from a number of texts. In Herondas' poetry mentioned above - *Mimiambi* 4.86-95 - the leg of the fowl was carefully carved off and given to the sacristan, and a food offering was placed in the mouth of the snake, purportedly in the form of a money gift into a box on which an ornamental snake reclined.<sup>102</sup> A considerable amount of the food, however, was allowed to be taken outside the precincts and consumed at

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<sup>101</sup> See E.J. & L. Edelstein *Asclepius* 1945: 277 where the authors contend that this holy bread was perceived as a means of averting evil.

<sup>102</sup> This idea of *pelanoi* or money handed to the god is noted by L.R. Farnell *Greek Hero Cults and Ideas of Immortality* Oxford: Clarendon Press 1921 p.257.

home. This account of course raises doubt about whether any actual sacrificial food offering was made at all. That some meat ended up for sale is suggested by references in Athenaeus *Deip.* 6.243f. and 13.580c-d. The destiny of the sacrificial food varied considerably, as can be seen by a late 4th or early 3rd century B.C.E. inscription<sup>103</sup> which describes four days of sacrifices at the festival of the Carneia on Cos. A frequent phrase is τούτων οὐκ ἀποφορά which meant that after the burning of the god's portion and the priests' receiving of their share, the remaining meat was to be consumed within the temple-precincts and not to be sent to friends or consumed in a worshipper's home as a domestic meal. On the 10th day, however, whilst it is stated in lines 7-9 that the sacrifice is restricted entirely to the altar in the *cella* and that certain sacrificial portions of the victim are to be offered to Queen Hera of Argos and consumed only within that *cella*, nevertheless after this sacrifice, it is permitted that the rest of the heifer flesh be taken and eaten at home. This example thus illustrates variety of practice - even within a single ceremony, some meat was eaten only *in situ* but some could be taken home.

### 5.8.3 LOCATIONS, PARTICIPANTS AND PRACTICE OF COMMUNAL MEALS

Although much of the available evidence is scattered and fragmentary, we shall nevertheless seek to address three questions to that material, namely where did the eating take place, who did the eating and what form did the eating take? In order to maintain flexibility in our thinking, we note at this point the comment of L.B. Zaidman and P. Schmitt Pantel (1995: 58) that rituals were mostly performed outside, not inside the temple, many Greek temples being locked for most of the year. Thus they reason that "from a strictly cultic point of view, the temple was not an indispensable element of Greek religion." (1995: 58). We need to be open to the real possibility that the context of 1 Cor.8-10 might have been a 'place of idols' rather than necessarily a temple as traditionally understood. Indeed it is true that "for the Greeks any location might serve as a place of cult, a sacred space. (*hieron*)." (1995: 55).

#### 5.8.3.1 Asclepius

We have already seen that the cult of Asclepius was beset with ambiguity. The god himself was ambiguous - "... he may be called with equally good reason an Olympian, a chthonian god, or a hero." (Edelstein 1945 Vol.II p.230). Participants' motives were also ambiguous. To the wealthy, sickness was an inconvenience and dread but to the poor, sickness could deprive them of an already precarious economic existence. For many therefore, involvement in the Asclepius cult would not have been primarily an attempt to

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<sup>103</sup> These fragmentary inscriptions from a house were first published in *BCH* vol. v pp.216ff 1881 and we examined them both there and in a subsequent article by E.L. Hicks "A Sacrificial Calendar from Cos" *JHS* 9 (1888) pp.323-337.

worship a divinity, but rather an individual act of sheer desperation to seek health and therefore physical survival in a hostile world. On top of this, however, the very nature of the eating itself was also ambiguous, located as it was in dining rooms sandwiched between the 'sacred' and recreational areas of the Corinthian *Asklepieion*. We do not know with certainty whether those rooms served the needs of worshipping incubants or the passing public who were using the recreational facilities of the precinct. Evidence from Aelius Aristides' (*Sacred Tales* II, 27) suggests that sacrificial portions were distributed only to fellow incubants and not necessarily to other attenders or patrons of the recreational area. P. Gooch<sup>104</sup> concluded indeed that at least some of the meals eaten there "were only nominally connected to idolatry, and not in any significant way." Indeed, according to Tertullian<sup>105</sup> (*De Idolatria* Ch. 20) a frequently heard expression was "You find him in the temple of Asclepius" indicating once more a social function.<sup>106</sup> If incubants dined in the inner part of the sanctuary at the Corinthian *Asklepieion*, then in order to be visible to the 'weak' (1 Cor.8:10), presumably the weak would have been within the inner area. This would seem to be less likely an option than the alternative, namely that dining was in a more open location such that the 'weak' could more easily have identified Christian diners, though of course the latter might then have been able to muster a whole range of reasons why such 'fringe dining' was not in their opinion idolatrous in any case. Indeed Aristides confirms that in 146-7 C.E., his treatment from Asclepius did involve ritual carried out in the courtyard of the Sacred Gymnasium at Pergamum in front of many spectators. (*Second Sacred Tale*, 77). Aristides shows how ritual incubation took place around the Temple, in the open air and on the temple road, but unfortunately he fails to state whether eating also occurred in these same locations. Pausanias 10.32.12 offers a useful note that within the precincts of Asclepius at Tithorea, there were dwellings for both the suppliants of the god and his servants, suggesting that at least some of those in the precinct may not have been actively involved in the actual cult. The indifference of both Asclepius and participants regarding the consumption of food in the Sanctuary is portrayed by Aristophanes in the *Plutus* 670-690. Cario, a slave, having seen the priest taking cheese-cakes and figs off the holy table, spots a tureen of broth and following the priest's example, lunges forward to grab the tureen. His wife's question as to whether Cario did not fear the god brings forth the response that his only fear was that the god might beat him to the tureen. Cario eats the broth and breaks wind as the god approaches, claiming that the god was too busy dealing with his patients to be concerned

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<sup>104</sup> P. Gooch *Dangerous Food: 1 Corinthians 8-10 in Its Context*. Wilfrid Laurier Univ. Press, Ontario 1993 p.81.

<sup>105</sup> *The Writings of Tertullian* Vol. 11 Tr. Rev. S. Thelwall in Ante-Nicene Christian Library T. & T. Clark 1869 p.171.

<sup>106</sup> Further evidence for such a function is that provided by Aelius Aristides (*First Sacred Tale*, 10) who dreams of meeting a long-lost friend at the entrance to the Temple of Asclepius and continuing their conversation inside the temple.

about his irreverence regarding food offerings. No doubt many did treat sacrificial food with indifference, as suggested by this 4th century B.C.E. satire. On top of this fundamental complexity and ambiguity, there was the additional feature of inconsistency, for as the Edelsteins conclude (1945 Vol.II:182), the rules and ceremonies differed in the various sanctuaries - "There was no generally accepted pattern of veneration in the Asclepius cult or in that of any other ancient diety." Interestingly they also argue that the Roman cult and processions of Asclepius were fashioned along Greek lines (1945:183 n.7). Finally some useful results have emerged from Tomlinson's research<sup>107</sup> on the Asclepius cult. Eating at Epidauros, for example, occurred in the *κατακόμιον* between temple and theatre, yet all three locations were considered as *ἐν τῷ ἱερῷ* (Paus. 2.27.5). Similarly, argues Tomlinson, eating at the Troizene complex involved large numbers within the confines of the sanctuary whilst the gymnasium at Epidauros functioned as a specialized dining hall. He notes finally that the ritual of Asclepius kept the dining room separate from the incubation area, but that this by no means rendered such meals totally secular in nature. Such a 'boundary' left the function of dining an open, uncertain and ambiguous affair which no doubt opened the door to a range of valid interpretations and plausible viewpoints both among inside participants and outside spectators.

### 5.8.3.2 Demeter and Kore

Though eating in dining rooms at Demeter (see Section 3.5.1) remains somewhat problematic for the mid first century C.E., the discovery of curse tablets<sup>108</sup> and the rebuilt Building T are potentially of great significance, whilst the abundance of lamp evidence suggests nocturnal rites and the tables used by diners appear to have been portable rather than permanent. Building T, restored in the Roman era, was not immediately accessible from the roadway and some of the dining couches were larger than normal. Their large size and proximity to the sanctuary entrance have led N. Bookidis and J.E. Fisher to venture that "it may well be that officials of the cult partook here of the sacrificial meal apart from the rest of the worshippers" (1972: 302), a suggestion which we shall develop in the context of the possible difference between 1 Cor.8 and 10:20-22. Certain couches were wider than normal and "may have included a resting surface for food and drink (ibid. p.302), whereas for other couches, tables were "undoubtedly portable", raising the tantalizing, but so far unverifiable, possibility that these wider couches may have involved specific food and specific people, perhaps those actually most closely involved in the sacrificial rites themselves. Building T was separated from the main Roman cult complex of theatre, temple and stoa, and may have served a chthonic purpose, according to

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<sup>107</sup> R.A. Tomlinson "Two Buildings in Sanctuaries of Asklepios" in *JHS* Vol.88 (1968) pp.108-116.

<sup>108</sup> Guthrie describes a situation for the Greek mind which is paralleled very closely in the Torajanese mind, namely that the earth had two functions - as receiving the seed which will later spring forth in new and fertile life and as home of departed souls. The two functions were inextricably connected. See *The Greeks* 1950: 284. The curse tablets found at the Demeter site constitute a vivid reminder of the dual ingredients of this particular Corinthian cult.

Bookidis and Fisher (1972: 304). Outdoor or tent dining may well have been common in this Roman period. The 1972 Report appears to confirm Paus. 2.4.7 in the statement that the Building G1-2, containing the cult statues, was extremely small, allowing access only to a very limited number of officials. Most participants in cult meals may never have got anywhere near the actual sacrificial act itself. Indeed most of the food may not have done so either. In her most recent work on Demeter at Corinth, Bookidis observes evidence of pig bones in the sacrificial pit area but notes the almost total absence of such bones from the dining rooms, as well as the complete absence of evidence for garbage pits around the sanctuary. It is tempting to conjecture that sacrificial pigs may not have been eaten or that the consumed food had its origin elsewhere than in the sacrificial procedure. However, we do know that grain was eaten as part of the communal meal. Interestingly Bookidis ('Ritual Dining' 1993: 54-5) suggests that *kollyva* appears in modern-day Greek usage to denote a wheat-cake served at memorial services for the dead. Such food, argues Bookidis, must be very similar in composition to that consumed during ancient sanctuary meals. Whilst possible inferences can be made from available evidence, it has to be admitted that for Demeter in Corinth, we lack the specific data for cultic ritual that would sharpen our picture of ritual procedures and dining practices.

### 5.8.3.3 Isis and Sarapis

Aelius Aristides described Sarapis as a "universal god for the whole world" in the sense that "although one himself, he is all things. Although one, he has the same power as all the gods."<sup>109</sup> Converts from such a belief system presumably found it hard to conceive of Jesus as in any way superseding Sarapis in his oneness or universality. Add to that the enormous range of occasions celebrated in the name of Sarapis and it becomes easy to see how many would have felt justified in continuing their involvement in such cultic occasions. Indeed the complexity of such meals, rooted in areas of ambiguity, boundary and conceptual thinking, is apparent in a number of respects.

Any temptation to think that 1 Cor.8 *must* involve cultic eating in one specific temple to one specific god or that 1 Cor.10:23 - 11:1 *must* involve a non-cultic home context is quickly dispelled when we realize the sheer breadth of locations in which the cult of Isis and Sarapis operated in the ancient world. Second and third century C.E. evidence indicates wide variety -

*P. Oxy* III.523 ἐν τοῖς Κλαυδ (ίου) Σαραπίω (νοσ) - private house.

*P. Oxy* I.110 ἐν τῷ Σαραπίω - in the temple.

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<sup>109</sup> P. Aelius Aristides *The Complete Works* Vol.II *Oration 45 Regarding Sarapis* Section 23 Tr. C.A. Behr. E.J. Brill 1981. Aristides adds the significant point that Sarapis was seen as judge and guide of the dead. Isis is similarly portrayed as a universal, all-embracing divinity in the writings of 2nd century Apuleius, though the context admittedly is fictional. (*Metamorphoses* Vol.2, 11.5 Ed. and Tr. J.A. Hanson LCL 1989.)

*P. Oxy* XIV.1755 ἐν τῷ οἴκῳ τοῦ Σαραπίου - in the house of the Sarapeium.

*P. Oxy* XII.1484 ἐν τῷ θ[ο]ηρίῳ - in the temple of Thoëris.

*P. Oslo* 3.157 ἐν τῇ ἰδίᾳ οἰκίᾳ

*P. Yale* 85 ἐν τῇ πατρικῇ ἑαυτοῦ οἰκίᾳ

*P. Columbia* inv. 548a ἐν τῷ λοχίῳ

*P. Columbia* inv. 550a ἐν τῷ οἴκῳ τοῦ Σαραπίου

In addition to the two known sanctuaries of Sarapis in Corinth noted in Chapter 3.5.3, there was a third and nearby shrine of Sarapis in the Forum located in the centre of a room with a water storage area in an adjacent room.<sup>110</sup> Smith offers the intriguing suggestion that this could indicate cultic activity, possibly of a more serious nature than that offered in the more nominal public monuments. If so, then this suggests that meals of this cult drew a wide range of participants and this indeed appears to have been the case, as we shortly shall see. The occurrence of the term οἶκος creates uncertainty of location and therefore potential ambiguity<sup>111</sup> regarding the sacrificial or non-sacrificial nature of the food itself. The temple of Sarapis at Arsinoë (*P. Lond.* 1177 dated 113 C.E.) appears to have run a public restaurant and this may have been operative also at the so-called οἶκος of the Sarapeum. *P. Oxy* 1755 refers to ἐν τῷ οἴκῳ τοῦ Σαραπίου but it is unclear whether the οἶκος was Apion's own house or was a part of the temple itself. Such locations raise questions about the nature of the food served and should cause us not to assume automatically that the meal in 1 Cor.10:27-30 was in a private house totally detached from a temple. We know, for example, from a demotic contract<sup>112</sup> of 116-5 B.C.E. that merchants were in close proximity to cultic locations - "Kaufleuten des Hauses des Osorapis (d.h. des Osiris - Apis - Tempels), die innerhalb des Tempelbezirkes Häuser besaßen." Even the more specialized Greco-Roman clubs dedicated to offering sacrifices to specific deities, met in a variety of situations - temples, their own premises if they had them, structures adjacent to the temples or in private homes. Moreover Juvenal, *Satires* 15.39-44 reports a situation in Egypt where competing groups vied with one another, each claiming that only its own gods were true deities. His account, written in the second half of the first century C.E., then explains that although feasts were set out on tables in

<sup>110</sup> D.E. Smith "The Egyptian Cults at Corinth" in *HTR* 70 (1977) p.228.

<sup>111</sup> Locational ambiguity can be seen in two contrasting examples. R.A. Tomlinson - 'Perachora: the remains outside the two sanctuaries' in *The Annual of the British School at Athens* No.64 (1969) pp.164-172 - reports a banquet hall in a building located in the vicinity of a sanctuary. These dining rooms were not part of the sanctuary proper and this may have offered greater freedom in the range of food presented for consumption. By contrast the 'Podium Hall' at Pergamum, probably dedicated to Dionysus, contained an altar at its centre, such that dining would have been part and parcel of the sacrificial procedure. In such a situation it would have been hard to view food as other than blatantly sacrificial. See *Pergamon - Archaeological Guide* by Dr. Wolfgang Radt. (2nd. Ed. Istanbul: Türkiye Turing ve Otomobil Kurumu, 1978 pp.20-21).

<sup>112</sup> Ulrich Wilcken, *Urkunden der Ptolemäerzeit* I. pp.17,52 Berlin-Leipzig 1927. My own translation of this point is as follows - "The merchants of the house of Osorapis i.e. of the Osiris-Apis Temples, who possess<sup>ed</sup> houses in the inside of the Temple district."

temples and were dedicated to gods, nevertheless some tables were set out at crossroads and the feasting involved merriment. The social was inseparable from the religious and location *per se* was not an automatic determinant of the nature of a particular feast.

Meals of the Sarapis cult not only were held in a wide variety of locations but they also attracted a wide range of participants. Second century C.E. Apuleius recounts the fictional adventures of the Greek, Lucius, who had become a devotee of Isis. Whilst it would be dangerous to tie this material into specific Isis sanctuaries, nevertheless it offers a number of insights. Apuleius *Metamorphoses* Bk.11. 8ff. describes an enormous range of participants in an Isis procession<sup>113</sup> - some pretended to be soldiers or huntsmen or magistrates, women in white vestments scattered flowers, initiates of the divine mysteries of both sexes and every rank and age (11.10), high priests and various gods in human guise, including one carrying the image of the supreme deity (11.11). Ritual acts and prayers were then carried out in Isis' private chamber by a limited group - chief priests, those carrying divine images and those already initiated. Presumably sacrifices may have been performed by these people at this point. Lucius' own initiation into the cult was carried out in the form of a ceremony in the innermost part of the sanctuary, followed by a banquet and party to celebrate the initiation. (11.22-24). Pausanias noted, regarding an Isis shrine in the territory occupied by the Tithoreans that although large numbers of people attended the feasts and although both wealthy and poor made animal offerings, nevertheless only those revealed by Isis in personal dreams were allowed to enter the actual shrine and those who did so entered them before feasts in order to cleanse the shrine by burying victims from previous sacrifices. The text indicates that only a specific group at Isis' invitation was responsible for offering sacrificial victims, even though the feast involved very many. (Paus. 10.32.13-18). Once again certain individuals seem to have been chiefly responsible for sacrifices, even though large numbers ate meals.<sup>114</sup> We continue to argue for a distinction between sacrifice and eating.

Just as locations and participants varied considerably, so also did the purposes for which meals were held in the name of Sarapis. A typical invitation is that recorded in *P. Oxy* 1484 from second or early third century C.E. which reads -

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<sup>113</sup> Youtie 'The *Kline* of Sarapis' *HTR* 41 (1948) p.25 argues that an Isis or Sarapis festival would attract "large numbers of pilgrims, vacationers and curiosity seekers."

<sup>114</sup> It is no doubt true that when the more specialized clubs and societies, particularly those catering for visitors from overseas, met together for meals, numbers may have been relatively small. However, other evidence suggests a wide spectrum of participant. See for example Euphrosynus, benefactor of the Antigoncans, in the banquet he gave (*JG.*, V, 2, 268 - late first century C.E., esp. lines 32ff.) and also the banquets offered by priest Theophilus and priestess Tryphera for all classes and ages. (*BCH* 1891, 184f. - late first or second century C.E.) See also the wide social range of feasters in Athenaeus, *Deip.* 4,149c. Presumably the larger the number of participants, the wider the spectrum of perspective, intention, degree of involvement and line of interpretation of cultic ritual.



Apollonius requests you to dine at the table of the lord Sarapis on the occasion of the approaching coming of age of his brothers at the temple of Thoëris...<sup>115</sup>

The perceived nature of this meal however is hotly debated.<sup>116</sup> Youtie (1948: 14) claims that some banquets may have been “purely social in character” yet even a marriage or coming of age involved a “thanksgiving to the god”. The fact that Sarapis was both guest and host meant that he functioned as provider, participant *and* recipient at banquets. In such an atmosphere of festivity, most participants would not have been able to say whether the banquet was ‘social’ or ‘religious’ in nature and function, unless of course they were forced to do so by a Pauline inquisition. In such a situation as the latter, a range of attitudes no doubt emerged concerning the acceptability of involvement by Christians - a veritable spectrum of interpretation, each point on which was held to be a valid position and viewpoint by those who held it.

#### 5.8.3.4 Heroes

Frequent reference has already been made to the cult of heroes and considerable variation of practice emerges from the available primary evidence. (Sections 3.5.4 and 4.4.1.5). It has become clear, through considerable evidence, that meals and sacrifices to the dead or special heroes often took the form of the *thusia* type of offering, where food actually *was* consumed. Thus, for example, Pausanias (10.4.10) describes daily offerings brought by the Phocians in honour of the hero who founded the city of Tronis. Victims were brought to the grave, blood was poured into the grave through a hole and the flesh was consumed during a meal *in situ*. In other situations the evidence for meals is simply lacking. Thus Pausanias 2.11.7 states that offerings were made to Alexanor as a hero and to Euamerion as a god, but nothing is said about the consumption of these sacrificial animals. The sacrificial portions were burnt on the ground, apart from the birds which were burnt on the altar. Thus in some hero ceremonies, feasting appears to have been the norm, whereas in others it is left unstated. In some, however, eating was viewed in a negative light, as for example in the situations touched upon by Pausanias 5.13.1-3. The Eleans made sacrifices to the hero Pelops in the form of a black ram offered by the magistrates. Only the neck of the ram is given to the man who provided wood for the sacrifices. If anyone eats any of the sacrificial meat, then that person is barred from entry

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<sup>115</sup> Translation from B.P. Grenfell and A.S. Hunt *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri* Vol.12, 1916.

<sup>116</sup> Milne ‘The Kline of Sarapis’ *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* Vol.2 (1925) pp.6-9 argued strongly that such meals were in no way intended to have sacramental significance nor even to honour the god. Wilcken however saw such meals as fulfilling an essentially religious, cultic role - L. Mitteis und U. Wilcken *Grundzüge und Chrestomathie der Papyrskunde* Georg Olms Verlagsbuchhandlung, Hildesheim. 1963 pp.101ff. Wilcken’s view is also expressed in *Archiv*. VI, 1920 p.424. (see Bibliog.) J.P. Kane (“The Mithraic Cult Meal” 1975: 332) may well be nearer the mark when he concludes - “The evidence with regard to Sarapis and Isis from authors, inscriptions and papyri suggests *both* occasions of good cheer with easy hospitality *and* moments of solemnity.”

to the temple of Zeus. Likewise those who eat meat from sacrifices to the hero Telephus at Pergamus are not allowed into the temple of Asclepius until they have bathed.

### 5.8.3.5 Roman Imperial Cult

The twin themes of variety and complexity emerge yet again when we turn to consider meals of the Imperial Cult. Our research into sacrifices of this cult revealed that ritual was carried out in a wide range of locational contexts - sanctuaries, central squares, council houses, theatres, sports arenas and even individual householders performing sacrifices on altars outside their houses as processions passed by. (Sections 3.5.5 and 4.4.2). Even as early as 399 B.C.E., though this of course would not be 'Imperial Cult', the first *lectisternium* was held in Rome (Livy Bk.5.13.4f) in response to severe summer weather and disease. In this eight day sacrifice to numerous gods, the *duoviri* sacrificed to various gods and the images of the gods were placed on banqueting couches and served with food. The significant points are that whilst only the *duoviri* are recorded as offering sacrifice, many people ate the large amounts of food laid out throughout the city. This sacrificial rite, we are told, was also carried out in people's homes. Sacrifice by specified individuals or by small groups of officials appears to have been the order of the day and the emphasis in the first century C.E. decrees and inscriptions we examined was very much on the acts of sacrifice rather than on the communal meal which followed. When feasting *is* mentioned in the sources it appears to have involved considerable numbers of people. Evidence in *OGIS* 533 from Ancyra shows a number of individuals who gave public feasts, accompanied by games, and the enormous *hecatomb* sacrifice and feast is mentioned twice. *SEG* IX.63 Line 5 records a brief statement from a funeral setting which employs the same term used by Paul in 1 Cor.8:10, namely κατακείμενον and is accompanied by a relief of a reclining banqueter. The world of the dead was never far below the surface in Greco-Roman thinking. Large scale feasting is evidenced also in the Forum Clodii decree of 18 C.E. (*ILS*, 154). Thus on the birthday of Tiberius Caesar, the decurions and the people were to dine at the expense of Quintus Cascellius Labeo, but the only animal sacrifices mentioned were two victims on Augustus' birthday and a calf every year on that day. Once again the insufficiency of the actual sacrificial animal(s) to feed large crowds does raise the question, as in Torajaland today, of whether or not the large amounts of consumed food *were* sacrificial or were simply ordinary human fare. The latter position could have been that for which some Corinthians may have been contending in the background to 1 Cor.8:8. Considerable amounts of food would have been required to feed the large numbers of people involved in protracted athletic meetings. Indeed the references to Tiberius Claudius Dinippus (West, 92 and Kent, 161) indicate his presidency of the Isthmian Games in 55 C.E., as well as his position as curator of the grain supply, during a period of repeated famines. One of Dinippus' responsibilities was for the expensive and constant entertainment of dignitaries. Plutarch (*Table-Talk*, 723A) tells us that during the Isthmian games, when Sospis was president, the large scale entertaining of

foreign visitors took place and on several occasions all the citizens were accommodated in banquet feasting. At the end of that first century C.E. the same pattern appears to have been operative, for we read in *CIL*. XI, 6377 from Pisaurum in central Italy that Titius Valentinus, son of Gaius of the Camilian tribe, *quaestor duovir* provided an annual feast for the colonists of Iulia Felix on the birthday of his son, Titus Maximus.

The first century C.E. thus appears to evidence a situation in which large numbers of people participated in feasts in a large number of types of location. Such a context might at first sight seem conducive to one of the main theses put forward to explain the conflict over sacrificial food which concerned Paul in 1 Cor.8-10, namely Theissen's view<sup>117</sup> that the weak and the 'strong' at Corinth represented two socio-economic groups. He has argued that the conflict was rooted in the fact that the weak/poor seldom ate meat in day-to-day living and therefore that when they did "it was almost exclusively as an ingredient in pagan religious celebration." Hence it was problematic for these 'weak' Christians. In a recent and challenging article, J.J. Meggitt<sup>118</sup> has strongly contested Theissen's argumentation by claiming that although meat was expensive in this period, it was nevertheless consumed in considerable quantities by the non-élite in unsacral settings, notably in the *popinae/ganeae* - cookshops - which were widely scattered throughout the urban settlements of the Roman Empire. He offers evidence also of various other forms and sources of meat available to the lower classes. Meggitt concludes that a major pillar of Theissen's thesis has been found to be unsound and that as a result we shall have to seek a fresh interpretation of 1 Cor.8-10. Whilst not totally rejecting the importance of socio-economic factors, Meggitt believes that a "more informed application" of Theissen's work will produce a new and profoundly different picture of the real situation in Corinth. It is for precisely such a fresh picture that we have argued in our research. Socio-economic factors were one, but only one, of a large number of determinants which formed the complex matrix of sacrificial food. This sheer complexity was caused not by a single time-specific factor, but by the timeless interplay of profound ambiguities, boundary definition problems and conceptual differences in thinking, which combined at every level to produce a minefield of valid individual interpretations of cultic practice and of Christian involvement in such practice. The final level of our investigation - that of the perceived meaning of the meals themselves - will now occupy our attention as we seek to deepen our grasp of the sheer complexity of cultic ritual.

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<sup>117</sup> G. Theissen *The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity: Essays on Corinth*. Fortress Press, Philadelphia. 1982 p.128.

<sup>118</sup> J.J. Meggitt "Meat Consumption and Social Conflict in Corinth" *J.T.S. New Series*. Vol.45 Pt.1 (Apr. 1994) pp.137-141. The widespread assimilation of the view that meat was largely unavailable to most ordinary people, can be seen even in the very latest articles to appear, as for example, the brief article by Ben Witherington III "Why Not Idol Meat: Is it What you eat or Where you eat it?" in *Bible Review* Vol. 10, No.3 (1994) pp.38-43 and 54-5.

## 5.9 THE PERCEIVED SIGNIFICANCE OF COMMUNAL MEALS

In this final section we shall avoid the temptation of trying to divide meals into those with 'social', as opposed to those with 'religious', purpose, for we have argued consistently against such a distinction. Instead we shall emphasize a final range of materials available to us, mostly from Roman authors of or around the first century C.E., and we shall classify them according to their most obvious and visible functions, seeking at the same time to identify other elements in the dynamic of the communal meal.

### 5.9.1 AS MARKERS OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC CLASS DIVISIONS

Although written four centuries before Paul's writings, Plato's *Symposium* reveals social distinction which we have already observed in a meal context in the form of the lowly position of Agathon (175C) as compared to the topmost place of Phaedrus (177D). Once the eating was well advanced, and thoughts turned to drinking, the statement is made that<sup>119</sup> "... they made libation and sang a chant to the god and so forth, as custom bids, till they betook them to drinking." (176A). The main emphasis appears to have been on the drinking, yet custom required at least an acknowledgement of the god's presence. Indeed more than that, the guests then proceeded to make speeches on the theme of love in honour of Eros, the god of Love. (177D-E). The atmosphere of the dinner may have been social and convivial, but its content and function could not have been dissociated from the world of religion.<sup>120</sup> No doubt each guest held an opinion on the nature and function of that particular banquet. Plutarch in his *Table Talk* recognizes the range of social and intellectual levels at a banquet and points out the need for care in selecting the most suitable types of discussion, whether religious, philosophical or otherwise, for such occasions (613D-614D). Alongside these distinctions, inevitably there arose the problem of allocating places for guests (617D-E). Indeed on one occasion, Timon was faced with a wide range of foreigners, citizens, friends and kinsmen, presumably representing a wide spectrum of opinion and perspective on communal meals. His solution to the problem of allocation was to give his guests complete freedom to choose their own place in which to

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<sup>119</sup> Plato *Symposium* Tr. W.R.M. Lamb LCL 1983. By contrast, Bookidis ('Ritual Dining' in *Greek Sanctuaries* 1993: 45) argues that it was common for priestly staff to join the celebrating population for a ritual banquet in the sanctuary confines "in order to reaffirm a sense of community through equal distributions of food."

<sup>120</sup> We have argued consistently that religion, society and culture were inextricably intertwined. Greco-Roman religion fulfilled vital social needs, particularly in the community life exhibited at communal meals, based on communal acts rooted in inherited tradition. The combining of the social and religious, gaiety and reverence, has been recognized by a number of scholars. See, for example, E.R. Dodds *The Greeks and the Irrational* Univ. of California Press (1951) p.243 concerning the post-Alexander emergence of private clubs to various deities; P. Schmitt-Pantel "Sacrificial Meal and Symposium: Two Models of Civic Institutions in the Archaic City" in *Sympotica* 1990 p.15 with regard to the archaic era of Greek Cities; Louise Bruit "The Meal at the Hyakinthia: Ritual Consumption and Offering" in *Sympotica* 1990 esp. pp.162-72 in which the author refers to the multiple meanings of ritual and presents the idea of *theoxenia* food offerings as a meal shared with the gods rather than as an offering as such; O. Broneer "Hero Cults in the Corinthian Agora" in *Hesperia* 11 (1942) p.152 n.71 noting that this mixture of gaiety and reverence is baffling to the 'more solemnly inclined Western Europeans.'

recline.<sup>121</sup> Plutarch lays emphasis on the importance of conversation, toasts and good fellowship (644D) and no doubt each guest attached differing value to such components. Indeed each would attend for what he or she felt to be valid and acceptable reasons. Ideally, argued Lamprias, whatever the mixture of classes of guests at a meal, the placing of those guests should not be based on rank or prestige. (618A).

The reality, however, was that many meals functioned as a means of demonstrating social and economic differences. For example Petronius,<sup>122</sup> writing in a work from the reign of Nero, records in detail a dinner party in the home of Trimalchio. Each guest has a separate table so that the slaves cannot crowd past and make them feel hot. The main objectives of this feast<sup>123</sup> appear to have been revelry, extravagance and the display of material wealth. Even here, however, other elements are discernible. The allocation of separate tables was based on the idea that "Mars loves a fair field" (Section 34), the allocation of food was presented on a round plate with portions for each of the twelve signs of the Zodiac (Section 35) and a hare was presented with wings to look like Pegasus. (Section 36). Indeed Trimalchio himself had been viewed as someone enabled by Mercury to achieve the office of *Sevir* or *Sexvir Augustalis* with its responsibility for carrying out the worship of the Emperor. The 'religious' was bound up even in the most ostensibly 'social' of meal occasions. Significantly also, the account notes in passing that at one point, Trimalchio left the feast to visit the toilet, during which interlude "With the tyrant away we had our freedom, and we proceeded to draw the conversation of our neighbours." (Section 41). The inference seems to be that some at least of the guests may have been present either out of sufferance or out of a sense of compulsion or obligation, rather than by voluntary choice.

The extravagance and indulgence characteristic of many communal meals, undoubtedly displayed a negative side, the sort of concerns expressed by Paul in 1 Corinthians 10:1-13. To attempt to deny the existence of what Paul called misbehaviour

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<sup>121</sup> Plutarch *Moralia, Table Talk*, 615 C-D.

<sup>122</sup> Petronius *Satyricon* 31-41 Tr. M. Heseltine. LCL 1975. One slave brought on a silver skeleton which apparently was by no means unusual, being a reminder to guests that although they were now eating, yet one day they would die.

<sup>123</sup> The intention to display wealth and class were seen also in a number of other meal situations which, for the sake of space, we simply note here, namely Seneca, 1st century C.E., "On the usefulness of Basic Principles" No.95, 27-8 and No.114, 9 *Epistles* Vol.III Tr. R.M. Gunmere, LCL 1925; Seneca *Epistles* Bk II Satire 2, 4, 12-14 and Book II Satire 8; Lucian *The Dream or the Cock*, 11; Persius *Satire* VI, 24; Juvenal, *Satire* 3 Line 140 and *Satire* 5; Plutarch, *Lycurgus* 10.

and immorality would be to fly in the face of available evidence.<sup>124</sup> In Athenaeus, *Deip.* 551F we find reference to κακοδαιμονιστάς where people in this dining club deliberately chose to dine on unlucky days, thus tempting and annoying the gods, in a reaction against rationalism. Such misbehaviour was perceived as inevitably resulting in an early death for offenders, as punishment inflicted by offended gods. Various types of deviant behaviour are evidenced right across the centuries. In the 5th century B.C.E., Aristophanes, (*Plutus* 596F) refers to the meals placed at the small shrines of Hecate at cross-roads. Some clearly failed to hold sacrificial meals in any sense of awe or respect, for these meals were devoured by passing and needy wayfarers. For such people, offerings constituted an opportunity for a free lunch at the 'expense' of the goddess. Theft of offerings from the Asclepius temple is likewise recorded by second century C.E. Aelian (*On Animals* 7, 13). Some, such as Diodorus of Sinope, managed to obtain free meals by careful planning and entry, as in a case described by Athenaeus, *Deip.* 239C. The inseparability of the social and the religious is then expounded by Athenaeus in his references to the socio-religious origins of sacrifices and feasts in 363D as combining "the impulse to enjoyment" and "relaxation" with the need for "due reverence".<sup>125</sup> Athenaeus contrasts the tiny portions offered nominally to the gods with the sheer extravagance of the feast and entertainment. In the first century BCE, Cicero includes the case of a huge dinner party at which a certain Rubrius suggested that the host Philodamus bring his daughter into the festivities. Philodamus tried to avoid a dilemma by saying that Greek custom did not allow women to be present at a male party. (*Against Verres* 1.26.65-7). Abuse was their object and the dinner ended in a highly unpleasant brawl. Philo writes about clubs whose *koinonia* is based not on principles but on "strong liquor and drunkenness and sottish carousing and their offspring wantonness."<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> Numerous examples of meal-time misbehaviour were found and examined but only a selection will be noted here - Sexual misconduct and general carousing - Arist. *The Acharnians* describes the feast of Bacchus (Lines 1085-1094) and notes that whilst the host provided garlands, perfumes and sweetmeats, the guests also brought provisions; whether sacrificial or not, however, is unstated. In lines 243-79 in a small scale celebration of the Rural Dionysia, the wife of Dicaeopolis seems to have a role as representing the spectators at the sacrifice. See LCL 1978 Tr. B.B. Rogers p.27 note c. Livy 23.18.12 and 39.43.4; Seneca *Ep.* 47.4, *Ben.* 3.26-7; Tacitus, *Agricola* 21; Plut. *Quaes. Conviv* 612F-613A; Quintilian *Institutio Oratorica* 1.2.8 and 2.2.12; Josephus, *Ant.* 18.65-80 set in the temple of Isis; Pliny *Ep.* 4.22.3-4; Athen. *Deip.* 420 E-F.

<sup>125</sup> Athenaeus *The Deipnosophists*, 363D. Tr. C.B. Gulick LCL 1930 Reverence was something distinctly absent from the Athenians' celebration of the festival of Dionysus. During the sacred and solemn epic of Orpheus, participants were condemned for dancing lascivious jigs - see Philostratus *Life of Apollonius* 4.21.

<sup>126</sup> Philo *Flaccus* 17,136-7 Tr. F.H. Colson LCL 1941. In relation to this, the enormous variety of perceived significance of communal meals is suggested yet again by the sort of comment made by Mary Douglas. Although her view does beg the question of what 'religious' actually means, it nevertheless reflects real variety - "The idea that primitive man is by nature deeply religious is nonsense. The truth is that all the varieties of scepticism, materialism and spiritual fervour are to be found in the range of tribal societies." (*Natural Symbols* 1970: Preface, p.4).

### 5.9.2 AS OPPORTUNITIES TO CONVERSE AND BUILD FRIENDSHIPS

That conversation was viewed as a significant component of communal meals is clear from a number of pieces of ancient literature. Epictetus, who lived approximately from 50-120 C.E., and as such was contemporary with Plutarch and Tacitus, condemns those who study philosophy simply to curry favour with prominent people, wanting “to make a display at a banquet of his knowledge of hypothetical arguments.”<sup>127</sup> Plutarch, (*Table Talk* 716 D-E), argues that it would be unreasonable to stop conversation but that it does need to be orderly and profitable. The mid second century C.E. author Aulus Gellius reports that the philosopher Taurus invited friends to dinner and that they brought to the meal not dainty foods, but ingenious topics for discussion so that when the eating ended, conversation began. (*Attic Nights*, 7, 13).

Inseparable from evidence of conversation, however, is the inevitable religious context which accompanied it. Thus, for example, Horace writes of a feast in honour of Neptune - “What better could I do on Neptune’s festal day? Nimble bring forth, o Lyde, the Caecuban stored away, and make assault on wisdom’s stronghold!”<sup>128</sup> Lucian’s cynical views on sacrifice extend also into the realm of communal meals.<sup>129</sup> Writing in mid second century C.E., he portrays a conversation in heaven between Zeus and Hermes as they view a feast on earth and reflect on the noise and babble which rises heavenwards. Pan is made to say about these barbarians that “... they come up only two or three times a year, pick out and sacrifice in my honour a he-goat with a powerful goatish smell, and then feast on the meat, making me a mere witness of their noise. However, their laughter and fun afforded me some amusement.”<sup>130</sup> To attempt to extract social life from religious cult would be as impossible as separating living and breathing.

Inevitably conversations led to friendships and undoubtedly banquets in temples and homes did involve the building and consolidation of such relationships. Yet herein were the seeds of real difficulties for Christians in Corinth and elsewhere. It seems clear from 1 Cor.5:10 that Paul in effect was giving permission for Corinthian Christians to continue their associations with the pagan idolaters *of this world*. Yet such relationships were bound to have profound consequences, for as Epictetus himself had observed<sup>131</sup> -

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<sup>127</sup> Epictetus *Discourses as Reported by Arrian* Vol.1 Bk. 1.26.9 Tr. W.A. Oldfather. LCL 1926. See also a similar situation in 2.19.9.

<sup>128</sup> Horace *The Odes and Epodes* Bk. 3 No.28 Lines 1-4. Tr. C.E. Bennett LCL 1968.

<sup>129</sup> Lucian *The Double Indictment* 10. Tr. A.M. Harmon LCL 1921.

<sup>130</sup> A contrasting view is apparent in Plato’s *Laws* 653 in which the gods are seen actually as ordaining feasts as periods of respite from human troubles and as affording opportunity to associate in feasts with the Muses, Apollo, and Dionysus for the benefit and blessing of participants.

<sup>131</sup> Arrian’s *Discourses of Epictetus* Bk. III Ch. 16, 1-2 “That one should enter cautiously into social intercourse” Tr. W.A. Oldfather. LCL 1928.

The man who consorts frequently with one person or another either for conversation, or for banquets, or for social purposes in general, is compelled either to become like them himself, or else to bring them over to his own style of living.

This, we contend, is a profound comment in the light and context of 1 Cor.8-10, for the Corinthian Christians would indeed have been caught up in a complex dilemma where clear markers and boundaries were decidedly absent. Horace (*Satires* 2.2.115-125) for example, describes a farmer who is visited by a long-absent friend or neighbour. Upon meeting they would feast and strengthen their friendship but they did not omit to pray to Ceres, the ancient Italian corn-goddess associated with Demeter. The social and the religious were *one* and a person could not be involved in the one without being involved in the other. The consolidation of friendship was one of the purposes of the many trade guilds and fraternal associations which flourished in the ancient world but once again we can see the boundary problems which would have confronted Christians. Aristotle, for example, described religious guilds and dining-clubs as “unions for sacrifice and social intercourse”.<sup>132</sup> He adds the point that people perform sacrifices and hold festivals “thereby paying honour to the gods and providing pleasant holidays for themselves.” The problem facing Christians would have been particularly acute when they were obliged to attend a feast provided by a rich benefactor or landowner.

The inextricable link between the social and religious functions of communal meals is further highlighted by Dio Chrysostom<sup>133</sup> who having heavily underlined the centrality and necessity of friendship, goes on to ask the tantalizing and, from the perspective of our research, highly challenging, question - “what sacrifice is acceptable to the gods without the participants in the feast?” No doubt many did attend feasts, as in modern Torajanese society, primarily for friendship and social contact,<sup>134</sup> rather than with serious religious intentions. This all-encompassing nature of the communal meal, and its indivisibility into separate and watertight individual components, is illustrated by Cicero’s 2nd century B.C.E. reference to clubs in honour of Cybele, the great mother goddess of fertility in Anatolia<sup>135</sup> -

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<sup>132</sup> Aristotle *The Nicomachean Ethics* Bk. 8.9.5-6 Tr. H. Rackham. LCL 1926.

<sup>133</sup> Dio Chrysostom *The Third Discourse on Kingship*, 96-97 Tr. J.W. Cohoon. LCL 1932.

<sup>134</sup> The friendship element of communal meals in the ancient world emerges widely across the spectrum of literature but lack of space forbids further detailed presentation of such evidence. This phenomenon can however be seen with particular clarity in Seneca, *Ep.* 19.10 quoting a saying of Epicurus, *Frag.* 542; Cicero *Letters to His Friends* 9.26.4, dated in 46 B.C.E.; Plutarch, *Table Talk* 612D, 621C, 642F and 708D; Lucian, *The Parasite* 22.

<sup>135</sup> Cicero *De Senectute* 13.45 Tr. W.A. Falconer. LCL 1971.



Nor, indeed, did I measure my delight in these social gatherings more by the physical pleasure than by the pleasure of meeting and conversing with my friends. For our fathers did well in calling the reclining of friends at feasts a *convivium*, because it implies a communion of life, which is a better designation than that of the Greeks, who call it sometimes a 'drinking together' and sometimes an 'eating together', thereby apparently exalting what is of least value in these associations above that which gives them their greatest charm.

It was this 'communion of life' on offer at cultic feasts which must have presented the first century C.E. Church at Corinth with the enormous dilemma and challenge of how to be, at the same time, Corinthian and Christian.

### 5.9.3 AS A MEANS OF FULFILLING SOCIO-POLITICAL OBLIGATIONS

Primary evidence clearly shows that participation in public meals was a definite requirement of those holding public office. A number of examples will serve to substantiate this claim. Pausanias (*Attica* 5.1) describes the *tholos* or Round House in Athens, which functioned as the Council Chamber of the Five Hundred. Those attending large public meals in this hall included foreign ambassadors, and the presidents - οἱ πρυτάνεις - who held office in turn for 35 or 36 days, were obliged to offer sacrifice at such banquets. Pliny in Book 4 Letter 6 acknowledges the congratulations offered by Maturus Arrianus on his appointment to the office of *augur* at the opening of the second century C.E. One of the responsibilities of the *augur* involved the examination of the entrails of sacrificial animals for purposes of divination.<sup>136</sup> Although late for our purposes, in his love-romance from the late third century C.E., Achilles Tatius made reference to a sacred embassy and noted that "... the sacrifices [αἱ θυσίαι] were handsomely performed, the members of the council being present and assisting at the service. Many were the blessings and hymns with which the goddess was invoked..."<sup>137</sup> The strong sense of obligation incumbent on public officials undoubtedly created dilemmas for Christian people, due to immense pressure to conform, as is the case today in Torajaland also.

Pressure was felt not only by those already in public positions but also by those seeking to gain social or political advancement. That the banquet system could be utilized for such purposes is clear in a number of sources. Epictetus claims that lower class people can gain access to banquets if they are willing to pay the price of entry set by the host,

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<sup>136</sup> Although a controversial issue and although a somewhat harsh verdict, Rev. W. Rees does at least make a basic point when he claims that if Erastus (Rom. 16) was *oikonomos* and thus *quaestor*, then a person in such office would have been expected to be present and even involved in pagan rites and as such "could hardly be a good Christian." See Rev. W. Rees "Corinth in St. Paul's Time Pt. II. Its People and Recent History" in *Scripture* 2 (1947) Catholic Biblical Association. p.110.

<sup>137</sup> Achilles Tatius *Clitophon and Leucippe* 8.7.6 Tr. S. Gaselee. LCL 1917.

namely the ability of the poor person to flatter and praise the host.<sup>138</sup> Lucian however is highly critical of those who use such techniques to enter banquets, for in any case, he argues, such people often end up bitter because they fail in their objectives. Lucian condemns those who chase the rich for "it is not so much being rich that they like as being congratulated on it."<sup>139</sup> Another pressure, indeed obligation, on all those who found themselves at a banquet table was the requirement to eat the available food. Once again Epictetus is helpful in pinpointing this basic prerequisite of participation -

Now when we have been invited to a banquet, we take what is set before us; and if a person should bid his host to set before him fish or cakes, he would be regarded as eccentric. Yet in the world at large we ask the gods for things which they do not give us, and that too when there are many things which they actually have given us.<sup>140</sup>

Finally on the level of ordinary family occasions, the social and religious merged imperceptibly. Thus for example family members obliged to attend birthday celebrations were frequently faced with the presence of sacrificial offerings. Dio's *Roman History* 54.26 records the birthday of Augustus. Iullus, the son of Antony who was *praetor* in 13 B.C.E. gave games in the Circus as well as a huge slaughter and entertainment on the Capitol. Horace (Bk. 4 Ode 11) refers to a birthday feast and an altar for the sacrifice of a lamb. Achilles Tatius (Bk.5.14.1-4) renders account of a wedding banquet held at a temple of Isis in which the goddess was called upon as witness to the marriage and as the source of blessing upon it. Funerals, as we have repeatedly seen, involved feasting, though the evidence does not always explicitly identify the sacrificed food eaten at table as being part of the actual funeral rite. Lucian for instance speaks of the need for relatives to set aside feelings of guilt and to sustain themselves with food following their period of mourning. Whether such food was sacrificial or not, however, remains unstated. (*On Funerals* 24.)

The range of perceived purposes and functions of communal meals was immense. A wide spectrum of human and social reasons has just been presented. No doubt some aimed not for the abundance of wine and meat, but for what Plutarch,<sup>141</sup> referring to occasions of sacred ritual, described as the experience of freedom of the mind from pain, fear and worry, together with a sense of the presence of the god at a feast and that god's acceptance of the ritual. Clearly, however, for some participants feasting constituted an

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<sup>138</sup> Arrian's *Discourse of Epictetus* Vol.2 *The Encheiridion* 25.4-5 Tr. W.A. Oldfather LCL 1928.

<sup>139</sup> Lucian *The Wisdom of Nigrinus* 22-3. Tr. A.M. Harmon. LCL 1913.

<sup>140</sup> Epictetus *Discourses as Reported by Arrian: The Fragments* No.17 Tr. W.A. Oldfather. LCL 1928.

<sup>141</sup> Plutarch *Moralia, A Pleasant Life Impossible* 1101E Tr.B. Einarson and P.H. De Lacy. LCL 1967.

opportunity for self-indulgence of various types (1102B) whilst for others there existed the view that their superstition caused them to attend rituals out of fear (1102C). Every individual had his or her reasons for attendance and involvement, such that they could argue a case which justified their own particular position. It is to one final perspective that we now return for consideration and evaluation.

#### 5.9.4 THE ISSUE OF SACRAMENTAL COMMUNION THROUGH MEALS

We return once more to the issue which, as we argued in Section 5.7.1, has brought considerable confusion to the exegesis of 1 Cor.8-10, namely that of sacramental communion. This is the concept according to which a deity is contained, really or symbolically, in the sacrificial meat and is then consumed by worshippers during a cultic meal. By this act, the worshippers appropriate the powers and traits of the deity and become united with that deity. In all the concrete examples of sacrifice and eating thus far presented in our research, we have found no evidence for such an understanding. We shall now further substantiate this claim, firstly from the work of scholars, particularly classicists, who have researched this area and secondly from ancient authors themselves.

Claims for sacramental communion have largely been centred on the cult of Dionysus and the Eleusinian Mysteries. Even in the cult of Dionysus, however, in which the raw bull flesh was supposedly eaten as a means of ingesting deity, A.D. Nock admits that we simply do not know how consciously this belief was held.<sup>142</sup> Whilst Farnell (1909: 177) describes the *omophagia* as a meal of raw flesh in which the god himself, incarnate in the wild animal, was consumed by the worshippers, nevertheless he feels that although its primary meaning may be that of ecstatic sacramental communion, this may not in fact represent the whole story. He draws a parallel with the Christian ceremony which is sometimes, he argues, interpreted jointly as a mystic union with divinity *and* as commemorative of something that actually occurred. The story of Dionysus' own death by being torn to pieces and devoured by the Titans does not appear in Euripides' *Bacchae* and Kirk for one casts doubt on the actual historicity of tales of women killing and consuming animals, particularly in Greece.<sup>143</sup>

Arguments for sacramental communion lose ground particularly when it comes to communal meals as practised in the Hellenistic and Roman periods. Festugière, for

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<sup>142</sup> A.D. Nock *Early Gentile Christianity and Its Hellenistic Background* Harper Torchbooks 1964 p.74. Nock adds the argument that in Greek religion, clear traces of the concept of sacramental communion "are not obtrusively frequent." Likewise regarding mystery cults, especially Eleusis, Nock concludes "There is nothing which necessarily implies a receiving of deity under tangible forms." Mylonas agrees that meals in Eleusis cannot definitely be established as sacramental in nature and argues that whilst eating together did produce bonds of friendship, the idea of achieving special relationship with, and rights from, the goddess is 'pure assumption' - see G.E. Mylonas *Eleusis and the Eleusinian Mysteries* Princeton Univ. Press 1961 p.271-2. For the same basic position, see also S.G. Cole *Theoi Megaloi: The Cult of the Great Gods at Samothrace* 1984 p.37.

<sup>143</sup> G.S. Kirk *The Bacchae of Euripides*. Trans. and Commentary Cambridge U.P. 1979 p.6-8.

example, has argued, with reference to the Dionysiac mysteries of those centuries, that “Il n’est jamais question d’un rite de communion au dieu, mais seulement de banquets ou de *symposia* en son honneur.”<sup>144</sup> As regards the nature of those banquets, Nilsson goes further by maintaining that the cult served only as a pretext to meet for “feasting and enjoyment.”<sup>145</sup> It is worth noting at this point that J.P. Kane has been critical of the work of E. Rohde<sup>146</sup> and others in the context of sacramental communion - “This uncritical acceptance of tragic images purporting to be cultic as in fact cultic was compounded by the imposition of language and conceptions on his source-material which could not be found there, and came from philosophical, mystical and Christian contexts” (Kane 1995: 1). Rohde said that the *maenads* [raving females of the Dionysos cult] “seek communion with Dionysos”, “have a share in the life of the god”, “become one with the god”. (1925: 258). None of these expressions, argues Kane, is found in any Greek source which describes maenadism. (1995: 1). Rohde affirmed that the soul “winged its way to union with the god” (1925: 259), but Kane says that when the *maenad* is described as *entheos*, Rhode (wrongly) translates this as “with and in the god”, [ibid.]. and he adds “they live and have their being in the god” [ibid.]. Again Kane contends that none of these expressions are found anywhere to describe cultic maenadism. Kane offers the timely warning that even reputable and respected scholars can mislead others, such that errors are passed on from one scholar to the next. (1995: 2). Undoubtedly this has been the case with regard to views on sacramental communion.

A number of ancient texts have been employed in connection with the argument for sacramental communion, but close examination points in a different direction. Thus for example Hesiod relates the incident in which Demeter drank the mixture of meal, water and soft mint prepared by Metaneira. The text is as follows - δεξαμένη δ’όσις ἐνεκεν πολυπότνια Δηῶ - which we render “The very venerable Deo (having) received it (the

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<sup>144</sup> Festugière, André-Jean “Les Mystères de Dionysos” in *Revue Biblique* 44 (1935) pp.192-211 and 366-396 esp. pp.206-7. My translation of this claim is as follows - “It is never a question of a rite of communion with the god but only of banquets or *symposia* in his honour.”

<sup>145</sup> Nilsson, M.P. *The Dionysiac Mysteries of the Hellenistic and Roman Age*. Lund: Gleerup 1957 p.64. A similar position was taken up by J.H.W.G. Liebeschuetz (*Continuity and Change* 1979: 82) who argued that in Roman religion the banquet following a sacrifice might well have yielded a heightened sense of human community but was not felt to bring the diner into spiritual communion with the divinity. This view very much confirms our own findings, particularly with regard to Roman meals.

<sup>146</sup> See E. Rohde *Psyche: The Cult of Souls and Belief in Immortality among the Greeks* Translated from 8th Edition by W.B. Hillis, 1925. J.P. Kane’s work was seen in his unpublished paper *Dionysiac Ecstasy* -read in Lausanne at a joint meeting of the Faculty of Theology (Univ. of Lausanne) and the Dept. of Religions and Theology. (Univ. of Manchester) Feb. 1995 p.1. Kane makes two other interesting points. Firstly that the *image* of Bacchic revelry *did* persist into Roman imperial art, and along with banquet scenes, represented a blessed afterlife on 2nd/3rd Century C.E. Roman *sarcophagi*. Secondly, Kane notes that although Festugière opposed the idea of sacramental communion, nevertheless he still viewed the chasing, killing and tearing of animal flesh as “actual maenadic ritual, real and historical, rather than as mythic images establishing boundaries” p.2. Kane thus underlines afresh the approach he had already taken twenty years previously, namely his repeated dismissal of the concept of sacramental communion at Greco-Roman meals. See “The Mithraic Cult Meal” 1975 pp.332, 334, 335, 336, 340, 343, 349 and 351.

drink) for the sake of the performance of the rite.” The Loeb Ed. reads “So the great queen Deo received it to observe the sacrament.”<sup>147</sup> The term ‘sacrament’ is, however, potentially misleading. This act of drinking commemorated the sorrows of the goddess but the text does not state that sacrificial communion was the result of the act of drinking. Athenaeus<sup>148</sup> makes occasional reference to the cult of Dionysus. For example Socrates of Rhodes in his *Civil War* mentions Antony’s visit to Athens and his use of Bacchic ‘caves’ and Dionysiac trinkets, but the all-night drinking contains no indication of sacrificial communion. (*Deip.* 4.148 B-C). The Arcadian meals described in *Deip.* 149C included the *Mazones*, which name the guild of Dionysus has retained, but the purpose of this meal and libation was to counteract the dangers of the streets at night. Thus sacramentalism is not indicated. Neither is it seen in *Deip.* 7.276B in Ptolemy’s preference for founding festivals and sacrifices connected with Dionysus.

Writing in the mid first century B.C.E., Diodorus of Sicily<sup>149</sup> notes that the Boeotians, Greeks and Thracians set up sacrifices every three years to Dionysus. His report continues - “Consequently in many Greek cities every other year Bacchic bands of women gather, and it is lawful for the maidens to carry the *thyrsus* [a staff or spear tipped with an ornament shaped like a pine-cone] and to join in the frenzied revelry, crying out ‘Euoi!’ and honouring the god; while the matrons, forming in groups, offer sacrifices to the god and celebrate the mysteries and, in general extol with hymns the presence of Dionysus...” Whether or not sacramental communion was either sought or achieved, however, is unstated in the text and in any case would hardly seem to fit the sort of banquet picture suggested by Paul’s description in 1 Cor.8-10. Plutarch mentions that the Greeks equate Dionysus with Osiris and that the ceremony of the burial of the Apis has close similarities to the rites indulged in by those under the spell of the Dionysiac ecstasies. Although the passage mentions that many Greeks made statues of Dionysus in the form of a bull, and that the women invoked Dionysus in some sense as a bull, nevertheless sacramental communion is not explicitly spoken of.<sup>150</sup>

Second century C.E. writers likewise make no specific mention of any concept of sacramental communion through the communal meals which followed sacrifices. Thus although both Aristides and Apuleius clearly saw cult meals within a religious context, nevertheless there seems to be no evidence in their writings of an actual sacramental view

<sup>147</sup> Hesiod *The Homeric Hymns*: ‘Hymn to Demeter’ 206-11 Tr. H.G. Evelyn-White. LCL 1974.

<sup>148</sup> Athenaeus *The Deipnosophists* Bk.4 Tr. C.B. Gulick. LCL 1957.

<sup>149</sup> Diodorus of Sicily Bk. IV, 3 Tr. C.H. Oldfather. LCL 1935. The apparent discrepancy in timing - ‘every three years’ cf. ‘every other year’ - is explicable on the basis that the Greeks in reckoning from an event included the year in which it took place.

<sup>150</sup> Plutarch *Isis and Osiris* 364D-F Tr. F.C. Babbitt. LCL 1984. Neither here, nor at *The Greek Questions* 299B - where there is more detailed reference to the women of the Eleians calling on Dionysus to come to them ‘with the foot of a bull’ - is there any suggestion of sacramental communion. In his thesis on *Cult Meals* (1987), W. Foss concluded that at Isis meals, as with all other cult meals, sacramentalism was not involved. p.126.

of meals in the sense of communion with divinity attained through ingestion of that deity by eating. Pausanias 7.27.3 mentions the city of Pellene with its sanctuary of Dionysus and describes firebrands being brought into the sanctuary at night and bowls of wine being placed throughout the city. No hint of eating or sacramental communion appears in the text. Reference is made by Pausanias in 8.23.1 to the Sciereia festival at Alea in honour of Dionysus at which women were flogged as part of the ceremony, in obedience to a response from Delphi. We see no evidence of food, drink or sacramental communion in this case. Finally Aelian, writing *On Animals* 12.34 in the second century C.E., describes how the people of Tenedos kept a pregnant cow in honour of Dionysus. They sacrificed the newly-born calf but the one who killed the animal was stoned by the people and was forced to flee. No details of a meal are given and no suggestion of sacramental communion is offered by the writer. Yet again the search for evidence of such communion proves to have been a search in vain.

### 5.9.5 CONCLUSION

The consensus of scholarship and the weight of available primary evidence indicate that the concept of sacramental communion by ingesting a deity did not form the backcloth to Paul's warnings in 1 Cor.10:14-22. Neither, however, can we agree with the conclusion of Willis' research, noted in Chapter 1.2.4, to the effect that pagan cult meals were overwhelmingly social in nature rather than being sacramental or communal. For some, sacrifices were meaningless, for some, simply customary, but for others they involved a recognition of the presence of the god and a recognition that they were in some sort of relationship with that god which could either help or harm them. Similarly the ancients attended and participated in communal meals for a wide variety of reasons but at every point of our analysis what did emerge was the inseparable presence of what we would call social *and* religious ingredients. Indeed it was precisely *because* meals at Corinth were not purely social that a problem had arisen in the first place. If the meals had been totally social in nature, then there would have been no issue for Paul to have dealt with.

We have seen that the backcloth to the issue of sacrificial food in 1 Cor.8-10 was a highly complex panorama, eliciting a wide range of valid individual interpretations and positions, based on the existence of numerous ambiguities, impossible boundary demarcations and varying conceptual understandings of divinity and humanity. Such a picture of the Corinthian perspectives is crucial, for as Hans Frör has argued in a very recent book "In the N.T. we find only half the correspondence [concerning the Corinthian Church]: the letters which Paul wrote."<sup>151</sup> In other words we have only one side of the story and as Frör rightly argues, in the context of trying to understand what Paul was

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<sup>151</sup> Hans Frör *You Wretched Corinthians: The Correspondence Between the Church in Corinth and Paul*. Translated from German by John Bowden. SCM Press Ltd. 1995 p.vii of Preface.

wanting to say to his Corinthian readers, “in order to understand Paul, we need the Corinthians!” (1995: 137). We agree wholeheartedly, but whilst Frör admits to using a good deal of guesswork and imagination to reconstruct imaginary conversations among church members in Corinth, our aim has been to search the available primary sources. True, the evidence is not complete but then it never will be. There will never come a time when all the evidence is *in* and all our questions are answered in full. Frör suggests that there may have been differences of opinion within the Corinthian Church over the issue of sacrificial food and that clarification was therefore sought from Paul. This is the basic position that we ourselves have taken. Because of the complex multi-faceted nature of images, sacrifices and communal meals caused by those ambiguities, boundary issues and conceptual differences, Paul was faced with a nightmare scenario of a broad range of arguable and feasible individual interpretations of cultic festivals and of the degrees to which Christians felt able to be involved on such occasions. Any attempt at ground level to define and demarcate the boundaries of ‘idolatrous worship’ was fraught with difficulties which even to this day have not been resolved by churches faced with such dilemmas. The apostle Paul stepped into this minefield and expended 74 verses in an attempt to deal with it. The strategies which he employed in facing such complexity and his reasons for adopting them, will now occupy our attention as we turn to the biblical text and seek to make fresh sense of the three chapters which have perplexed scholars and commentators for many years.

## CHAPTER SIX

### SOME IMPLICATIONS FOR EXEGESIS OF 1 COR 8-10

#### 6.1 INTRODUCTORY ISSUES

Before we attempt to map out the implications of our research thus far for the interpretation of the text of 1 Corinthians 8-10<sup>1</sup>, three areas will be given brief attention -

1. The setting of chapters 8-10 in relation to Paul's previous correspondence with the Corinthians about 'idolatry'.
2. The means of bringing the Corinthian conflict to the attention of Paul, with special reference to the *περὶ δέ* of 1 Cor 8:1
3. The identity of those presenting their case(s) to Paul.

##### 6.1.1 εἰδωλολατρία and εἰδωλολάτρης

According to Moulton and Geden<sup>2</sup>, these two terms, translated as 'idolatry' and 'idolater' respectively by the RSV, are not found in the Septuagint or other Greek versions of the O T, including the Apocrypha, neither do they occur in Greek writers before the Christian era. This immediately raises the question of how Paul's predominantly Greek congregation at Corinth might have understood Paul's use of such terms in 1 Corinthians. The possibility of conflicting conceptions, and hence divergent viewpoints, deserves serious attention if we bear in mind the reference in 1 Cor 5 to Paul's previous letter to the

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<sup>1</sup> Whilst the authenticity of 1 Corinthians has not been seriously questioned, there has been considerable debate concerning its unity, including the integrity of Ch 8-10. Many detailed theories have been advanced but whilst this issue will be mentioned from time to time, we take the basic position held and expressed by Belleville, namely "Because prevailing compilation theories involve greater improbabilities than and as many difficulties as the assumption of integrity does, the vast majority of scholars today accept the basic form and unity of 1 Corinthians as it stands in our manuscripts." (p.16) See Linda L Belleville "Continuity or Discontinuity; A Fresh Look at 1 Corinthians in the Light of First Century Epistolary Forms and Conventions" in *Evangelical Quarterly* 59 (1987) pp 15-37. The general consensus reached by the Colloquium on 1 Corinthians held in Rome in 1981 was that 1 Cor 8-10 constituted a unity. Georg Galitis holds a typical position - "Ich glaube, durch diese Analyse die Position der Einheit des Abschnittes 8: 1 - 11: 1 und somit seiner *Integrität* vertreten zu haben." My translation "I consider myself, through this analysis, to have supported the position of the unity of the section 8:1 - 11:1 and thereby its integrity." See G Galitis "Das Wesen der Freiheit: Eine Untersuchung zu 1 Ko 9 und Seinem Kontext" in *Freedom & Love: The Guide for Christian Life* Ed Lorenzo de Lorenzi. Monograph Series of 'Benedictina' Vol 6 Rome: St Paul's Abbey, 1981 pp 127-147 esp p 132.

<sup>2</sup> Rev W F Moulton and Rev A S Geden *A Concordance to the Greek Testament* T & T Clark Edinburgh 1897 p 270. The absence of these two words can be seen in E. Hatch and H.A. Redpath *A Concordance to the Septuagint*, Vol. 1, 1954. The term *eidololaitres* - *idolater* (RSV) - by contrast occurs 7 times in the N.T. and always in a negative context, signifying those who will be judged, condemned and excluded from the kingdom of God - 1 Cor.5:10,11, 6:9, 10:7; Eph.5:5; Rev. 21:8 and 22:15.



Corinthians. It appears from 1 Cor.5:9-11 that a misunderstanding<sup>3</sup> had arisen among some at least of the Corinthians, based on Paul's previous letter to them. In 1 Cor 5:9 Paul reminds his readers that he had written to them previously not to associate with fornicators (πόρνοις) but that, by this exhortation, Paul did not in fact mean the immoral of this world - including εἰδωλολάτραις ('idolaters') - for in such a case, that would mean leaving this present world ἐπεὶ ὀφείλετε ἄρα ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου ἐξελεθεῖν.

Paul thus clearly allows Corinthian believers to associate with the idolaters of this world τοῦ κόσμου τούτου. The apostle then explains his actual intention regarding Corinthian associations. In 5:11, he uses an epistolary aorist verb νῦν δὲ ἔγραψα ὑμῖν which RSV translates 'But rather I wrote to you', although a footnote in RSV offers an alternative rendering 'now I write'. Either Paul wrote this intention to the Corinthians previously or he is putting it on paper in 1 Cor 5:11 'now', but whichever option we choose, it does mean that the Corinthians had been confused by Paul's statement or had misunderstood it or had chosen to ignore it. F F Bruce concludes that the letter referred to in 1 Cor 5:9 must be a reference to an earlier letter sent by Paul to the Corinthian church. He argues this on the grounds that although the aorist 'I wrote' could in itself be interpreted as an epistolary aorist - 'I am writing' cf 4:17 - nevertheless, the phrase 'in my letter', with the following words, forbids such an interpretation.<sup>4</sup> Similarly Bruce takes the position that in 5:11 the adverb νῦν probably has adversative force ('as it is') and the aorist is a preterite, rather than an epistolary aorist<sup>5</sup>. Thus 5:11, claims Bruce, refers to what Paul meant when he wrote the previous letter to the Corinthians. As Bruce rightly points out, moreover, the previous letter concerned 'immoral people' but we cannot be absolutely sure whether Paul actually specified 'idolaters', 'greedy' or 'robbers' in that previous letter, though as Bruce suggests, (1971: 57) "...Paul indicates that they were at least implied there." F W Grosheide agrees with Bruce that the aorist - 'I wrote' in 5:9 is an historical aorist<sup>6</sup> but goes on to argue, contrary to Bruce, that the aorist in 5:11 is an epistolary one, referring to what Paul is writing now, i.e. he repeats 5:9 and sets out again the words of his earlier letter. (Grosheide 1953: 128 n.11). The exact content of Paul's previous letter to the Corinthians cannot be known, except in so far as it dealt with association with immoral people. We suggest therefore that Hurd<sup>7</sup> may be somewhat

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<sup>3</sup> We shall argue that a range of viewpoints existed in the Corinthian Church and that this range probably was well represented in their letter to Paul. The combative style of 8:1-10:22, however, suggests that a good portion of their letter centred on the right to attend 'pagan' feasts in temples and we agree with G D Fee that this was the core problem with which Paul wrestled in 1 Cor 8-10 (*The First Epistle to the Corinthians* NICNT Eerdmans 1987 p 441, 474)

<sup>4</sup> F F Bruce *1 & 2 Corinthians* New Century Bible, Oliphants. 1971 p. 57

<sup>5</sup> Bruce *1 & 2 Corinthians* 1971 : 58

<sup>6</sup> F W Grosheide *Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* Eerdmans 1953 p. 127 n.8.

<sup>7</sup> J C Hurd *The Origin of 1 Corinthians* SPCK London 1965 p.225

overstating his case when he claims that "the Corinthians' protest that the eating of idol meat held no dangers for them clearly reflects a command in the Previous Letter that they avoid idol meat."

A realistic assessment of the situation is offered by Fee when he admits that we cannot know whether the previous letter was in response to something already going on in Corinth, or whether Paul actually initiated the correspondence.<sup>8</sup> Fee's own position is that the verb 'I wrote' in 5 : 9 is a true aorist whereas in 5:11 it is epistolary. The context of 5:9-13, of course, is Paul's call to the church to discipline the immoral man of 1 Cor.5:1. The responsibility for judging the 'outsider' belongs to God (5:13) but the need for the church to discipline its own members is stated in 5:12. The issue which interests us, however, and which is highly relevant in the context of 1 Cor 8 - 10, is the dividing line between 'insider' and 'outsider' in the situation of cultic meals. Whilst exegetes have spent much time and energy seeking to unravel the complexity and apparent inconsistency of Paul's argumentation in 1 Cor 8 - 10, the fact of the complexity and inconsistencies of cultic meals themselves appears to have been forgotten by scholars. We contend that the boundary line between 'insider' and 'outsider' in the context of cultic meals was ambiguous, imprecise and complicated. There were degrees of involvement for Christians at cultic festivals which made any clear-cut or absolute defining of 'idolatry' highly problematic. It was into such a minefield that Paul had to tread as he wrote 1 Cor. 8 - 10.

Paul informs his readers that his prohibition of contact, or even meal-fellowship, with idolaters was with regard to idolaters who bore the name 'brother' *τις ἀδελφῶς ὀνομαζόμενος*. On the other hand, Christians presumably were free to associate with, and even enjoy table-contact with, the idolaters who were unbelievers and who belonged to this world. It would appear therefore that Paul was encouraging - or at least permitting - Corinthian Christians to continue their relationships with 'pagan' idolaters.

The confusion likely to have been generated in practice, however, becomes apparent when we take into consideration Paul's warnings in 1 Cor 6:9, 10:7 and 10:14. Having apparently condoned Christians associating with unbelievers in the previous letter and in 1 Cor 5:9-13, Paul now takes a very firm and dogmatic line, with severe warnings to the believers at Corinth. In 1 Cor 6:9-10 Paul points out to the Corinthians that 'idolaters', such as some of the Corinthians once were, will not inherit the kingdom of God. Then in 1 Cor 10:7 comes a further warning to the Corinthians not to become 'idolaters' *μηδὲ εἰδωλόατραι γίνεσθε* followed by a strong exhortation "to shun the worship of idols" (RSV) *φεύγετε ἀπὸ τῆς εἰδωλολατρίας*.

Thus, within the same letter to the Corinthians, Paul is urging the fledgling believers to maintain their associations with unbelieving idolaters, and yet at the same time,

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<sup>8</sup> G D Fee *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* Eerdmans NICNT Commentary 1987 p. 222 n.11

to avoid idolatry and to avoid the danger of becoming idolaters themselves.<sup>9</sup> On the basis of what has been shown to have constituted the cultic background to 1 Cor. 8 - 10, it will readily be seen that Paul is here posing a complicated challenge to Corinthian Christians in terms of the demarcation of acceptable and non-acceptable boundary-markers for believers. That which Paul was proposing in theory - associate with worldly idolaters but do not become idolaters, indeed shun idolatry - was in practice a veritable minefield of confusion and complexity. Small wonder, therefore, that with the range of possible understandings of cultic festivals and attitudes towards Christian involvement in them, the church at Corinth sought clarification from the apostle Paul. What has emerged from both Torajanese and Corinthian situations is that terms such as 'image', 'idolatry' and 'worship' were defined differently by different people. The boundaries by which these terms could be defined were many, varied, relative and flexible, and thus generated a wide range of valid and viable perspectives and interpretations within the church.

### 6.1.2 PAUL'S AWARENESS OF THE CORINTHIAN CONFLICT

There exists a wide scholarly consensus that, beginning at 1 Cor. 7:1 "Now concerning the matters about which you wrote", Paul begins a series of responses to issues raised in a letter from the Corinthians. These topics are located, say scholars, at the *περὶ δέ* occurrences throughout 1 Corinthians, namely at 7:1; 7:25; 8:1; 12:1; 16:1; 16:12. Thus for example, Bruce speaks naturally about the letter written by the Corinthians to Paul, pausing only to reflect that what actually caused them to put pen to paper "cannot be determined with certainty". (1971 : 78) Likewise Hurd takes it completely for granted that Paul in 1 Cor. was responding to a list of written questions set out in a letter from the Corinthians to Paul. (1965 : 114) Grosheide adopts the assumption that the Corinthians had written a letter to Paul but at least he does note that there is a difference between 7:1 and 8:1. He points out that the opening of Ch. 8 recalls 7:1 "and it is safe to assume that Paul is treating here a second point concerning which the Corinthians had questioned him." (1953 : 188) Slightly more cautious is Barrett's view, regarding the introduction in 8:1 - "Paul turns to a fresh theme raised (it appears) in the Corinthians' letter."<sup>10</sup> Finally Gordon Fee (1987 : 358) makes the repeated point that the Corinthians were responding

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<sup>9</sup> It is interesting that Paul did not completely outlaw all contact between Christians and idolaters. Indeed Thornton "The Destruction of Idols - Sinful or Meritorious" *J.T.S. New Series* Vol 37 (1986) pp. 121 - 9 observes that "There is in fact no direct evidence that Christians publicly insulted or destroyed pagan shrines or idols on any specific occasion before the end of the third century....." (p.122) Beyond this time, however, such acts of destruction of pagan idols became more common, indeed they were seen even as a duty, and with the Church Fathers we see an increasingly vehement polemic against idols and idol food. Indeed Augustine (Ep. xciii.10) was even willing to endorse current capital punishment, for sacrificing to idols, as a warning to anyone who might be tempted along that line.

<sup>10</sup> C K Barrett *A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*. A & C Black, London 1968 p.188

by letter to Paul's previous letter - "Most likely in their letter to him they had taken exception to his earlier prohibition." [the prohibition on Christians taking up their 'right' to continue to attend meals in pagan temples].

Thus there appears to be an almost universal position among scholars that 1 Cor 8 - 10 is Paul's response to Corinthian questions contained within their letter to the apostle, referred to in 7:1. A serious challenge to this consensus has been made by Margaret Mitchell<sup>11</sup> who has questioned the assumption that each  $\text{περὶ δέ}$  in 7:25; 8:1; 12:1; 16:1, and 16:12 refers back to 7:1 and that each  $\text{περὶ δέ}$  must therefore, introduce, in order, a topic contained in the Corinthians' letter to Paul. Likewise she challenges the assumption that Paul would only introduce a topic raised by the Corinthians in their letter to him with  $\text{περὶ δέ}$ . Mitchell argues, on the contrary, from ancient Greek texts, that  $\text{περὶ δέ}$  is simply a topic marker, not necessarily with reference to a previous letter, but used on the basis that the new topic referred to "is readily known to both author and reader" (1989 : 234). Thus the use of  $\text{περὶ δέ}$ , claims Mitchell, does not indicate how the author or reader became informed of the topic. Mitchell considers a number of  $\text{περὶ δέ}$  occurrences in literary and rhetorical works, literary letters, private documentary letters and the New Testament. She concludes that  $\text{περὶ δέ}$  is not solely an answering formula and can be used as one of a variety of forms to open up a new subject. In literary letters the  $\text{περὶ δέ}$  formula can refer to oral or written types of communication or to a topic which the letter writer chooses to bring up. Indeed, Mitchell concludes that in private documentary letters, even where a previous letter is mentioned, this does not mean that topics introduced with  $\text{περὶ δέ}$  have necessarily come from that letter. (1989 : 250) Mitchell concludes, from her analysis, four implications for the study of the composition of 1 Corinthians -

1. The  $\text{περὶ δέ}$  formula ought not to be used by those who build partition theories on the basis that all sections in 1 Corinthians introduced by  $\text{περὶ δέ}$  should be part of a single letter because Paul would not interrupt his answers to written questions with discussion of topics from oral reports. This line of reasoning is no longer feasible if all of the topics headed by  $\text{περὶ δέ}$  cannot be shown to have come from the Corinthians' letter. What was to stop Paul from using a variety of ways of introducing new topics?

2.  $\text{περὶ δέ}$  cannot be used to make a clear distinction between information which was written and that which was oral. It is such a distinction which Hurd tries to make in his exegesis and Mitchell believes this is not a valid approach.

3. We cannot be certain that the topics dealt with by Paul in 1 Corinthians 7 : 25ff were necessarily mentioned by the Corinthians in their letter (7 : 1) to Paul. All we can say is that all topics introduced in 7 : 25ff by  $\text{περὶ δέ}$  were known to both the Corinthians and to Paul.

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<sup>11</sup> Margaret M Mitchell "Concerning ΠΕΡΙ ΔΕ in 1 Corinthians" in *Nov.Test.* 31, 3 (1989) p. 229f.

4. Mitchell concludes (1989 : 256) that "the composition, structure and arrangement of 1 Corinthians is determined by Paul's rhetorical purpose, and not by the Corinthians' letter." περὶ δὲ does show us the different topics introduced by Paul in 1 Cor, even if it does not tell us the source or order of those topics.

The common ground amongst all scholars, it would seem, is that whether the communication between the Corinthians and Paul was oral or written or both, the fact remains that both parties were aware of the existence of conflict in Corinth concerning attendance at cultic meals. Perhaps Paul had already tackled this issue during his eighteen months in Corinth but because of misunderstanding, rejection, disobedience, confusion or the emergence of particular circumstances such as the Isthmian Games, the conflict remained unresolved and compelled Paul to lift his pen. A related question to that of how awareness was given to Paul regarding the conflict is the related issue of who, in the Corinthian Church, was communicating these concerns to Paul.

### 6.1.3 THE INSTIGATORS OF THE COMMUNICATION WITH PAUL

J C Hurd believes it to be unlikely that two groups in Corinth had disagreed over the idol meat issue and had appealed to Paul for advice. Hurd rather contends - "We may presume, as Paul presumed (8:7) that some Corinthians were less secure in their new faith than others. But nowhere is there evidence that they formed a group or that their point of view had been communicated to Paul. In 1 Corinthians Paul appears to be concerned solely with those who are wise, knowledgeable and boasted of their freedom." (1965 : 125) Hurd states that in 1 Cor. 8:1 - 13 and 10:23 - 33, Paul appears to accept the premises of the wise Corinthians, whereas in 10:1 - 22 he seems to take a strict Jewish or Jewish-Christian line of argumentation. Yet Hurd then goes on to admit that even in 8:1 - 13 and 10:23 - 33, Paul takes up Corinthian slogans and modifies them. Hurd argues for the unity of the epistle but takes the view (1965 : 143) that "Paul's condemnation of idolatry is equally as hypothetical as his argument concerning the 'weaker brother'." However Hurd does believe that the situation of 1 Cor. 10:23 - 11:1 seems "more concrete than the preceding sections." (1965: 143) Hurd thus attempts to reconstruct what the Corinthians might have written to Paul and he clearly portrays this as a list of reasons from the wise to Paul as to why they felt able to continue to eat idol food. As Hurd<sup>12</sup> says (1965 : 147) "There was no 'weak' or 'scandalized' second party." Paul however was able to agree with much of what the wise had claimed and according to Hurd, Paul virtually allowed the Corinthians to continue unchanged in their actual behaviour, though of course Hurd makes this claim in the only context which he seems to regard as in any sense

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<sup>12</sup> Whilst Fee is sympathetic to Hurd's doubts about 'parties' as such and to his view that the *whole* church had written to Paul, nevertheless Fee remains unconvinced, as we do, about Hurd's suggestion of the hypothetical nature of attendance at temple feasts. See G D Fee "Ἐἰδωλόθῦτα Once Again: An Interpretation of 1 Corinthians 8 - 10" in *Biblica* Vol 61 (1980) p.176 and 179.

'concrete', namely 1 Cor. 10:25 - 27. According to Hurd, Paul is thus answering strong objections from the 'wise' in relation to their claims to be able to eat idol food in Corinth.

Gordon Fee describes what he calls the traditional view of what was happening in Corinth regarding 'idol-food', namely that Paul was responding to an internal problem between the 'weak' and 'the strong' over the issue of marketplace food.<sup>13</sup> The strong, in the name of 'knowledge' and 'freedom', propose eating such food (8:7 - 13), some perhaps attending cultic meals at temples (8:10; 10:14 - 22). Some might even have felt they were upbuilding the weak but the weak were opposing eating on 'conscience' grounds.<sup>14</sup> Thus, say scholars, Paul deals with the basic problem, namely, marketplace food, by firstly addressing the 'strong' and using the stumbling-block concept (8:1 - 13 cf 10:30 - 11:1) and then by encouraging the weak to take a broader view (10:23 - 29). In Ch 9 Paul uses a personal example of his own willingness to give up his freedom for the sake of others. He also prohibits temple attendance in 10:14 - 22.

For Fee, however, such a viewpoint is full of problems for four reasons - (1987 : 359)

(1) 8:10 deals with a temple context, not a market-place food context.  
 (2) If 8:1 - 13 and 10:23 - 29 are addressed to the same issue, then there is a conflict here. Some claim that Paul is addressing two different groups, though the text does not suggest this.

(3) It fails to realize that 8:4 - 6 is related to 10:14 - 22 not to 10:23-29.

(4) The idea of the Corinthians asking Paul's advice does not square with Paul's highly combative and aggressive approach in Ch 9 as well as in 8 :1-13 and 10:1-22.

Fee's solution is the one with which we are in agreement, namely to treat "8 : 10 and 10:1 - 22 as the basic problem to which Paul is responding throughout." (1987 : 359)

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<sup>13</sup> Fee *The First Epistle* 1987 : 358. See also H F von Soden, 'Sacrament and Ethics in Paul' in *The Writings of St Paul* (ed W Meeks, N Y, 1972) p.257 - 68; A Ehrhardt 'Social Problems in the Early Church in *The Framework of the N T Stories* (Manchester 1964) p.275 - 312; C K Barrett 'Things Sacrificed to Idols' in *NTS* 11 (1964 - 5) 138 -53; Theissen *Social Setting* (1982) 121 - 43; J Brunt 'Rejected, Ignored, or Misunderstood? The Fate of Paul's Approach to the Problem of Idol Food in Early Christianity' *NTS* 31 (1985) 113 - 24.

<sup>14</sup> Gerd Theissen's interest in 1 Cor. 8 - 10 is indicated in his article "Die Starken und Schwachen in Korinth" *Evangelische Theologie* 35 (1975) pp. 155 - 172. He makes the point that "Wenn in 1 Kor 8 - 10 dieser soziale Aspekt verblasst ist, so liegt das daran, dass sich die Debatte auf einen Punkt konzentriert hat, der theologischer Argumentation am leichtesten zugänglich war; das Problem des Götzenopferfleisches." My translation: "If in 1 Cor 8 - 10 this social context is faded so the reason for that is that the debate has concentrated on one point which was easiest accessible to the theological argument - and that's the problem of idol meat". (p.163) In attempting a sociological analysis in which the 'Strong' are the economically prosperous, high status people and the 'weak' are the poorer lower classes, Theissen appears to have polarized, and thus to have over-simplified and over-categorized, the whole issue. He has sought to argue the probability that the 'strong' belonged to the 'wise and powerful' of 1 Cor.1:26 and that they were thus socially dominant in the church. Theissen argues that Paul basically agreed with the 'strong' but advocated love patriarchy between the social classes. See G. Theissen 'The Strong and the Weak in Corinth: A Sociological Analysis of a Theological Quarrel' - Ch.3 in *The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity*. T. & T. Clark 1982 p.139. Theissen however appears to fail to allow for rich Christians who recoiled from eating idol food or poor Christians who had no problems in that respect.

On this view *eidolothuta* refers primarily to sacrificial food at cultic meals held in pagan temples and is dealt with in the entire section 8:1- 10:22, and thus Paul forbids the continuation of the practice on ethical grounds ( 8:1 - 13) and on theological grounds (10:14 - 22). Thus 10:27-30 represents a different position, namely one of permission to eat, unless someone else at the private meal points out the idolatrous origin of the food. Thus far, we are in complete agreement with Fee's view of the section 8 : 1 - 11 : 1. Fee however is somewhat bold in his statement that cultic meals, such as those of Asclepius, Demeter and Isis were regularly being eaten in Corinth in Paul's time. Archaeologists, as we have seen, are somewhat more cautious, but at least Fee is one of the few scholars who has recognized, as our own research reveals, that such meals probably involved "a combination of religious and social factors." (1987 : 361).

Fee's reconstruction of events in Corinth in the mid-first century CE is along the lines that some Corinthians, following their conversion - and probably following Paul's departure - returned to their former practice of attending cult meals. (1987 : 361). Paul probably forbade such 'idolatry' in the earlier letter and some Corinthians then responded by arguing that 'idols' had no reality, that food was a matter of indifference to God, that baptism and the Lord's Supper offered special protection to believers and that Paul's apostolic authority was questionable anyway. Thus this group pressed their case on the basis of their 'knowledge' about idols and food. Others with 'weaker consciences', however, viewed such meals as a "return to idolatry and an abandoning of Christ". (1987 : 362).

Fee feels that Paul cites the Corinthians' letter at several points, namely 8:1 & 4 and probably at 8:8 also. Paul may well also be alluding to their arguments when he writes 8:10, 9:1 and 10:1 - 4. Fee speaks of 'knowledge' in the context of knowledge about 'idols' and 'food' . He then points out how Paul shows in 8:1 - 13 that love, not knowledge, is the ethical foundation for behaviour. Fee then adds that "also at issue is their misunderstanding of the true nature of idolatry and their false security in the Christian sacraments". (1987 : 363). Fee's argument, however, assumes that 'idolatry' could be defined in absolute terms and was encompassed within clearly delimited and unambiguous boundaries. This is what we would seek to challenge. Thus Fee also implies throughout his introductory section on 1 Cor 8 - 10 that those arguing their case in the letter to Paul were the so-called 'strong' at Corinth.

F.F. Bruce writes about threats in Corinth to the liberty of the Gospel and unity of the church, and claims that in countering these tendencies "Paul thus had to campaign simultaneously on more than one front". (1971 : 23). This explains in part, suggests Bruce, why modern readers have difficulty in understanding the Corinthian letters. On top of this, "In reading them, we often find ourselves in the position of people listening to one end of a telephone conversation and trying, not very successfully, to reconstruct what is being said at the other end. There are many interpretative problems in the Corinthian correspondence the solutions to which can hardly be more than intelligent guesses".

(1971 : 23). Bruce holds the view that whilst Paul was in Ephesus, he received disturbing news about the ethical practices and principles of the Corinthians. Paul thus sent a letter - now called the 'previous letter' or Corinthians A. (referred to in 1 Cor 5:9-11). Next Paul received a letter or visit from Chloe's people which described party-spirit at Corinth. Paul responded with a letter of rebuke in which he signalled his intention to visit them soon and to send Timothy to them even sooner. This letter - Corinthians B - consisted of 1 Cor 1-4 but before sending it, a letter arrived "from the Corinthian church in which the writers assured Paul that they remembered his teaching and observed the 'traditions' which they had received from him, and sought his ruling or advice on a variety of questions, including marriage and divorce, food that had been sacrificed to idols..." (1971 : 24). The bearers of this letter - probably Stephanas, Fortunatus and Achaicus - gave Paul oral reports of further church problems at Corinth. Thus Paul extended his letter - Corinthians B - to deal with all the contentious issues and sent it to Corinth perhaps by Stephanas and friends. Thus Bruce feels that the letter was compiled as a unity but over a period of perhaps some weeks in the year 55 CE. With regard to the actual instigators of the letter to Paul, Bruce simply refers to "the Corinthians" (1971 : 78) but he does note that the RSV punctuates 'all of us possess knowledge' as being a quotation from the Corinthian letter "representing one powerful viewpoint in the church." (1971 : 79). From this it might be argued that their letter was penned by the libertines who felt that everything was permissible, whereas in Ch 7 he tackles the ascetics who opposed sexual relations. It is thus clear that Paul in 1 Cor is addressing a wide spectrum of Corinthian opinion and this may reflect in turn a letter from the Corinthians to Paul in which *various* perspectives were outlined and not just those of the 'strong'. The possibility thus exists that the letter from the Corinthians to Paul was actually composed by the whole church or even by the 'weak' as a complaint against the 'strong'. Indeed if the 'strong' at Corinth were the chief culprits of faulty belief and practice, what would be their motivation in exposing their failings? Why not rather lie low and keep quiet, unless of course they were convinced that they could write freely to Paul because they had a valid, indeed unassailable, case in their favour?

The writing of 1 Corinthians is dated by Barrett in the early months of 54 or perhaps towards the end of 53 C.E. (1968 : 5). Barrett maintains that the previous letter, according to Hurd, was written by Paul to "command and enforce the provisions of the Apostolic Decree" and as such "it condemned idolatrous practices, forbidding outright the use of food sacrificed to idols". (1968 : 7). This letter puzzled the Corinthians and caused them to seek clarification from Paul. Paul then rethinks his original hard line on idol-food and produces 1 Cor 8-10. Barrett however is not convinced by Hurd's approach because it allows too short a period of time for 're-thinking' and because Paul makes no mention of the Apostolic Decree in 1 Corinthians. Barrett tends towards caution with regard to the background of 1 Cor -

It is sad that we do not know more of the historical circumstances that lay behind the writing of 1 Corinthians, but we must probably be



content to reconcile ourselves to ignorance, and we may perhaps allow ourselves to render Paul's own advice in 1 Cor 4 : 6 as: It is better not to read too much between the lines. (1968 : 10 - 11).

Barrett also makes the interesting observation that Paul was a busy man combining his own trade at times with Christian ministry. Thus he may have had little time to write a lengthy letter such as 1 Corinthians. If therefore he wrote the letter over a period of time, then "a letter written in such circumstances may be expected to show occasional inconsistencies, and passages in which the same topic is looked at from different points of view." (1968 : 15) Indeed Barrett explains Paul's apparent inconsistency between Ch 8 and Ch 10 by saying that the idol food issue had two complexities -

- (1) It was necessary to distinguish between the mere consumption of food and its consumption in a context which was idolatrous.
- (2) Paul had to bear in mind both Christian freedom and the obligation of Christian love.

Thus, argues Barrett, it is these complexities which explain "apparent inconsistencies in Paul's treatment of sacrificial food ..." (1968 : 16). What Barrett fails to mention, however, is the complexity also involved in the actual range of ancient perspectives on images, sacrifices and communal meals. These factors must also be considered in our exegesis. According to Barrett in his exegesis of 1 Cor 7 ff., "It is a very probable view.....that the Corinthians had written to Paul, asking his advice on certain problems of conduct and the like." (1968 : 154). Barrett refers frequently to the Corinthians' letter but with regard to 8:10 he offers the suggestion that "this verse probably reflects a claim made by the strong Corinthians ...." (1968 :196)

## 6.2 THE NATURE & FUNCTION OF *GNOSIS* IN 1 COR 8

The occurrence of the term *gnosis* nine times in 1 Corinthians - four of them being in Chapter 8 at verses 1, 7, 10 and 11 - invites consideration of W. Schmithals' view that Gnosticism lay at the root of the Corinthian conflict over sacrificial food. Schmithals contends that "it is, however, typically Gnostic to participate in pagan cultic meals from a deliberately 'Christian stance'."<sup>15</sup> He explains this in terms of the Gnostic belief that the demons have been conquered and that participation in cultic festivals simply underlines the Gnostics' victory over the flesh. He argues that the Gnostics saw *gnosis* as power, salvation, deliverance and freedom - "*Gnosis* is to the Gnostic what *pistis* is for Paul, indeed it is more, in that *elpis* is superseded, and *agape* has become unimportant. Anyone who possesses *gnosis* is free." (1971: 150) The results of such a belief, argues Schmithals, included contempt for the 'flesh', denial of resurrection and existence as *pneuma* leading to extremes of asceticism or libertinism. In the context of 1 Cor.8-10, Schmithals is convinced that the whole letter was compiled by an editor out of two letters.

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<sup>15</sup> Walter Schmithals *Gnosticism in Corinth: An Investigation of the Letters to the Corinthians*. Translated by John E. Steely. Abingdon Press NY 1971 p.226.

Epistle A, which among other sections included 9:24 - 10:22 and 2 Cor. 6:14-7:1, displays Paul's anti-Gnostic prohibition of participation in cultic worship, whilst Epistle B, which included 7:1 - 9:23 and 10:23 - 11:1, records Corinthian reactions to Paul's admonitions in 10:1-22. In other words, once Paul had forbidden worship, this then raised the issue of whether Christians were permitted to eat sacrificial food itself, especially since some in Corinth, according to Schmithals, had claimed to have *gnosis* and were aware that idols and pagan gods no longer had any meaning.<sup>16</sup> For a number of different reasons, we contend that Schmithals' strong emphasis on Gnosticism is ill-founded and can be refuted -

1. The first cracks in Schmithals' position are detectable in the scholar's own argumentation. Whilst he argues that Paul attacked Gnostic tendencies in 10:1-22, he admits that the apostle did this "of course without having precisely understood the attitude of his opponents." (1971: 227). Similarly "since we do not know to what extent Paul is referring to the congregation's letter in 8:1ff.", Schmithals confesses that we cannot reconstruct their form of Gnostic argumentation in detail. He claims that 8:1ff does allow us to infer that the Corinthians had appealed to *gnosis*.

2. A number of scholars have rightly argued that fully developed Gnosticism was a feature of the second, not first, century C.E. Bruce reflects the views of a number of scholars when he maintains that "it would be anachronistic to call them [the Corinthians] 'Gnostics' - a term which is best reserved for adherents of the various schools of Gnosticism which appear in the second century A.D. - but their doctrine might legitimately be called 'incipient Gnosticism'." (1971:21) S. Arai<sup>17</sup> likewise concludes "Die Gegner des Paulus in Korinth waren also geneigt gewesen, 'gnostisch' zu sein, sie waren aber noch nicht gnostisch." Ellis<sup>18</sup> reveals another facet of the argument in addition to his point about lack of first century evidence, namely, that at the time of 1 Corinthians itself, Paul

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<sup>16</sup> R.A. Horsley has argued that such *gnosis* that God is One and that idols are nothing can be viewed not in relation to Gnostic libertinism but rather against the backcloth of Hellenistic Jewish tradition as expressed in Philo and the Wisdom of Solomon. Some at Corinth claimed to have *sophia* and *gnosis* as means and content of salvation. Paul, however, with his Pharisaic training, reminds his readers of the other side of the coin, namely the demonic dimension of paganism. See R.A. Horsley "Gnosis in Corinth: 1 Corinthians 8:1-6" in *NTS* 27 (1980-1) pp.40ff.

<sup>17</sup> My Translation "Paul's opponents in Corinth tended to be Gnostic, but were not yet Gnostic". See Sasagu Arai 'Die Gegner des Paulus in 1 Kor. und das Problem der Gnosis' in *NTS*.19 (1972-3) p.437. The same basic position is held also by C.H. Dodd *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* CUP (1953) p.97; Gordon Fee *The First Epistle* 1987: 365 n.32; J. Murphy O'Connor 'Freedom and the Ghetto' in *Revue Biblique* 85 (1978) p.544 n.6; R. McL Wilson 'How Gnostic were the Corinthians?' in *NTS* 19 (1972-3) pp.70-1 who emphasizes that in the first century C.E. "there is no gnostic myth, no gnostic system, no gnostic document" and points out the severe danger of interpreting N.T. texts which may reflect *gnosis* in terms of the later Gnosticism. This, he argues, can distort the whole picture.

<sup>18</sup> E.E. Ellis "'Wisdom' and 'Knowledge' in 1 Corinthians" in *Tyndale Bulletin* 25 (1974) p.83. Ellis, in referring to Paul's understanding and use of the term *gnosis*, makes the valid point that "even if first century parallels were available, of course, they might not be the parallels most relevant to explain Paul's thought or situation." (p.84) Such an observation ought to serve as a warning to those venturing on detailed and extensive word searches - the benefits are very real but the dangers are by no means absent. Computerized TLG Word Searches undoubtedly can be a mixed blessing.

was dealing with “somewhat confused children” rather than actual opponents and that “1 Corinthians does not speak of parties, but rather of individual preferences or tendencies...” (1974: 83 n.8). There is much to be said for the validity of this point. Indeed one of our concerns in this debate is the dogmatic assertion by Schmithals that Gnosticism holds the one all-embracing key to the Corinthian situation, that “there was only *one* battlefield in Corinth” and that “Paul also takes a stand only against this one heresy.” (1971: 288) In short, we contend that Schmithals is too narrow in his hypothesis.

3. Our third area of objection to Schmithals’ work centres on problems of understanding the term *gnosis*. Barrett wisely points out that although *gnosis* seems to have been linked with a set of religious ideas in Corinth, the term itself “does not necessarily point to the religious phenomenon described (with bewildering variety of definition) as gnosticism.” (1968: 37) He goes on to argue that the term *gnosis* “was probably (at this stage) a wide one...” (1968: 189). Indeed even Schmithals notes the absence of the definite article in 1 Cor.8:1 with respect to *gnosis* and admits that “undoubtedly in the present case the concept must be especially referred to the knowledge of the reasons which allow the eating of meat sacrificed to idols.” (1971: 143) This appears to suggest a particular use of *gnosis* in 8:1 which is different from that elsewhere and this is precisely what we shortly shall argue.

4. Finally we note the view of P. Borgen<sup>19</sup> which reflects our own position - “... there is no need to look at material on Gnosticism in order to explain the various attitudes towards pagan sacrifice and sacrificial food in Paul’s letters and in the book of Revelation. The variety of attitudes reflected in Jewish sources gives us sufficient background for understanding the struggle in early Christianity in the New Testament period.” In other words, the struggles over sacrificial food do not require adherence to the theory of Gnosticism at Corinth. We are in sympathy therefore with Nock’s blunt conclusion<sup>20</sup> - “The plain truth is that you could not have found anyone in Corinth to direct you to a Gnostic church: the overwhelming probability is that there was no such thing.”

## 6.3 EXEGESIS OF 1 COR. 8

### 6.3.1 CHAPTER 8 : 1 - 3

It has been seen that attempts to view 1 Cor 8 through ‘gnostic spectacles’ are problematic and open to doubt. We therefore propose an alternative, and fundamentally simpler, interpretation of the term *γνώσις* in 8:1. The first step towards a statement of such an interpretation lies in the recognition of a possible degree of difference between

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<sup>19</sup> P. Borgen “Yes, No, How Far?” 1994 p.56 n.47. Borgen’s emphasis on the great range of Jewish attitudes to cultic involvement forms a parallel to our own arguments on the range of individual perspectives of Christians at Corinth.

<sup>20</sup> A.D. Nock *Essays on Religion in the Ancient World* Ed. Zeph Stewart. Vol. II O.U.P. (1972) p.957.

Paul's use of γνῶσις in 8:1 and that in 8:7. As Schmithals has noted briefly, and as we pointed out previously, γνῶσις in 8:1a carries no definite article., whereas in 8:7 we read ἡ γνῶσις. This suggests the possibility of at least some differences in meaning between the two usages, 8:1a involving a wider and more general meaning than 8:7. Further consideration of the text indicates another difference. 8:1 states πάντες γνῶσιν ἔχομεν which may be Paul's response, by restatement, of the Corinthians' claim that "we all have knowledge". In 8:7 by contrast Paul clearly opens up a new section of his argument by claiming 'Ἄλλ' οὐκ ἐν πᾶσιν ἡ γνῶσις. But (the) Knowledge is not in all." What also emerges in 8:1-3 is that the γνῶσις in 8:1 is immediately portrayed negatively by Paul as something which can generate pride - φυσιοῖ = 'puffs up' or 'inflates'. We draw the conclusion from this argumentation that Paul's use of γνῶσις in 8:1a may have been different from that in 8:7. We put forward such a possible hypothesis tentatively rather than dogmatically. Our research has revealed the existence of a range of 'knowledge' about what people felt was happening at cultic feasts. If each person's 'knowledge' is pressed as a *fact* or as the *only* way of viewing cultic festivals, then it produces conflict and it may be such 'knowledge' that Paul criticizes in 8:1-3 as 'puffing up'. Something like 'knowledge' can be 'good' or 'neutral' and yet cause problems. Paul's negative treatment of 'knowledge' in 8:1-3 may thus intend to deal with the attitudes which result from believers pressing their own individual knowledge about cultic feasts. Certainly it cannot be denied that Paul used the term *gnosis* rather than some other term, but another possibility is that he used it ironically, seeking to convey under- or overtones beyond the plain sense of the word itself. After all, as J. Reumann has argued, "Galatians and portions of Corinthians abound with invective and sarcastic questionings, and such feelings often lead to the use of *irony*."<sup>21</sup> Allowing for these uncertainties about Paul's intended meaning of *gnosis* in 8:1a, we cautiously suggest the following hypothesis for this verse.

In view of what has been seen of the complexity of the 'idol food' issue in Corinth - as in the Torajanese Church of modern Indonesia - and in view of the wide range of valid viewpoints on the boundaries of Christian involvement in cultic festivals, we maintain that γνῶσιν in 8:1a may well be directly related to the phrase Περί δὲ τῶν εἰδωλοθύτων in the sense that the Corinthians as a whole had reported to Paul that everyone had knowledge concerning εἰδωλοθύτων. In other words everyone in the church at Corinth had their own 'knowledge' about what was going on at cultic festivals and about where the boundaries of involvement or separation lay for Christian believers in relation to those cultic festivals. Paul is thus recognising in 8:1a that all (πάντες) believers at Corinth possessed their own knowledge of these issues. The precise boundaries of 'idolatry' varied in practice and in the eyes of different beholders each of whom had his or her 'knowledge'.

<sup>21</sup> Reumann deals briefly with a number of points at which he believes Paul uses varying degrees of *irony* - 1 Cor.1:17 - 2:16; 4:8; 7:40; 8:5;10:1ff;11:17,22;12:1 and 2 Cor.2:11; 4:4; 9:1; 10:12; 11:4,5,7,13,19,26; 12:2f., 11,13; 13:10. See his article "St. Paul's Use of Irony" in *The Lutheran Quarterly* Vol.7 (1955) pp.140-5. Quotation from p.142.

Therefore because there existed a wide range of valid and individual positions regarding 'idol-food', because the issue was not resolvable on the basis of any one absolute interpretation and because the different perspectives were bringing conflict into the church and threatening its unity, then the only option open to Paul in such a situation was to shift the whole argument away from the minefield of individual interpretation and to argue from the yardstick of 'community consciousness.' Thus although Paul does deal with the practical ground-level issue of 'idol-food' at various points in 1 Cor 8-10 nevertheless the bulk of his letter is grounded in a range of principled and communal argumentation. This will be investigated in due course and in greater detail. We shall deal with some verses in considerable detail, while at the same time seeking to grasp the broader sweeps of Paul's argument in 1 Corinthians 8-10, thereby not losing sight of the 'wood' because of all the 'trees'.

Paul moves from the individual knowledge of believers about τῶν εἰδωλοθύτων into the territory of the communal immediately at the outset in 8:1b . He shifts the basis of action from ἡ γνῶσις which 'puffs up'<sup>22</sup> to that of ἡ ἀγάπη which builds up, and in so doing, Paul attempts to re-define γνῶσις in 8:2 - 3. He then develops his theme of love in 1 Cor.13. In all of this, therefore, we contend that there is no need to view γνῶσις in terms of gnostic thinking or Gnosticism.<sup>23</sup> Surely in 8:1a Paul could not have been consenting to the idea that all the Corinthian believers, and himself included, had 'knowledge' in the gnostic sense, or even that the so-called 'strong' writers of the letter had gnostic 'knowledge' as he himself had. Rather, γνῶσις in 8:1a may refer to the wide range of claims to 'knowledge' which Corinthian believers held regarding the nature and significance of cultic festivals, what was involved in the mechanics and dynamics of those occasions, and their wide range of attitudes towards Christian involvement in such activities. It was those conflicting positions which had generated discord and division at Corinth and which Paul now downgrades in 8:2-3, whilst elevating the principle of 'love' in his first move to address this volatile situation.

The apostle, having warned of the power of γνῶσις to inflate, now proceeds in 8:2 to deflate his readers by showing that knowledge itself is limited and inadequate because "If any one imagines that he knows something, he does not yet know as he ought to know." (RSV) Knowledge claimed by the Corinthians, through the past and up to the

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<sup>22</sup> Paul previously uses this verb φυσίω in 1 Cor.4:6 in the context of the pride and boastfulness of showing allegiance to one individual as opposed to another. The apostle then employs the verb again in 4:18,19 in the sense of arrogance expressed against Paul and in 5:2 where the Corinthians express arrogance in spite of immorality among them. The use in 8:1b would certainly bear the interpretation that rigid adherence to claimed 'knowledge' can produce pride, stubbornness and consequent strife and division over sacrificial food.

<sup>23</sup> Conzelmann concurs with this claim when he argues "Yet 'gnosis' in the technical sense is not necessary in order to provide a ground for the Corinthians' attitude. The hints in 8 : 1 - 6 point in a different direction." See H Conzelmann 1 Corinthians; A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians. Hermeneia Series. Fortress Press. Philadelphia 1975 p. 138 n.7.

present - ἐγνώκειναι (Perfect Infinitive Active of γινώσκω) is not that knowledge which they ought to have. Some Corinthians thus had not yet attained to the knowledge which it was necessary for them to possess.

Having begun in 8 : 1a with the possible variety of claimed 'knowledge' about what was involved in the whole issue of cultic festivals, Paul now seeks to demonstrate in 8:3 the nature of the true knowledge to which the Corinthians should be aspiring. 8:3 is introduced by the conjunctive particle δέ which draws a contrast with Paul's preceding claim in 8:2. If a person loves God, then that constitutes the evidence that such a person has been known by God - ἔγνωσται ὑπ' αὐτοῦ. 'Love' and 'knowledge' go hand-in-hand and are inextricably intertwined. Paul reminds the Corinthian believers that if they love God, then they are known by God and they know God. The centrality of the principle of love is thus highlighted by Paul and love for God becomes the context of the issue of 'idol-food'. Indeed it is the principle and practice of love for others which will now occupy centre-stage for the remainder of Paul's attempts to deal with the complex issue of 'idol-food' in Corinth. The fraught relationships between believer and believer over the issue of 'idol-food' have now been brought under the umbrella of true knowledge, namely love for God and relationship to God and to others, themes which will emerge again and again in the remainder of Paul's letter, especially in 1 Cor 13.

Paul has achieved his aim of establishing that ἀγάπη 'love', not γνῶσις 'knowledge', is the basis for true Christian ethics and behaviour.

### 6.3.2 CHAPTER 8:4-6

That 8:1-3 is preparatory for what Paul will say in vv 4 - 6 is evidenced by the connecting particle οὖν, at which point the apostle picks up from 8:1 his main theme of eating εἰδωλοθύτα. Paul's 'therefore' in effect asks his readers to recall, and constantly bear in mind, the crux of his argument in vv 1 - 3, namely love for God. This is one of the 'community arguments' employed by the apostle - one of the golden threads which he weaves through the remainder of his wrestling and reasoning with the Corinthian believers.

We believe that 8:1 -3 prepare the way for a statement of the content of 'knowledge.' This specific 'knowledge' is set out in 8:4-6 and Paul then uses this understanding of 'knowledge' to develop his line of argument in 8:7-13 and beyond. We propose therefore that the γνῶσις, which appears to have been claimed by at least some Corinthians, consists of the two elements contained in verse 4. Paul accepts, in the context of τῆς βρώσεως τῶν εἰδωλοθύτων - the eating of 'idol-food' - that -

1 οὐδὲν εἶδωλον ἐν κόσμῳ i.e. 'no *eidolon* exists in (the) world' or '*eidolon* is nothing [ie a non-entity/unreality] in [the] world'.

2 οὐδεὶς θεὸς εἰ μὴ εἷς i.e. 'there is no God except one' or 'God is nothing unless/except one.'

It is in 8:4 - on which verse the whole of section 8:1 - 7 appears to hinge - that Paul introduces the term εἶδωλον and in our above statement of the content of γνῶσις, as

stated in 8:4 - 6, we deliberately left εἰδωλον untranslated into English. This is because we believe the very term itself was part of the issue between Paul and the Corinthians. In this section, particularly close attention needs to be paid to the Greek text, for a number of reasons -

1 The RSV consistently translates εἰδωλον as 'idol', when in fact the normal pagan Greek term for a cultic image actually was *agalma*. The RSV thus assumes and perpetuates the negative, polemical usage of the word 'idol' for any εἰδωλ. cognate. Thus the RSV rendering of 8:4 is "Hence, as to the eating of food offered to idols, we know that 'an idol', has no real existence, and that 'there is no God but one'. The RSV and NIV also translate εἰδωλον as 'idol', whilst the REB offers a different translation of 8:4 - "Well then, about eating this consecrated meat: of course, as you say, 'A false god has no real existence, and there is no god but one.'" The NEB version is similar "Well then, about eating this consecrated food: of course, as you say, 'a false god has no existence in the real world. There is no god but one.'" Thus at least five translations of the text use the loaded term 'idol' or 'false god'.

2 The RSV translates οὐδὲν εἰδωλον ἐν κόσμῳ as 'an idol has no real existence', yet surely an 'idol' as a physical object in a temple would be manifestly plain for all to see. At least this is how most readers would conceive of an 'idol'. The RSV rendering is thus ambiguous and fails to distinguish between the physical object and its possible religious or philosophical significance. Indeed the RSV translation forecloses all the options. The very ambiguity of the term εἰδωλον raises the real possibility of a gulf between Paul's intention and perspective on the one hand and those of the Corinthians on the other.

3 Various sections of 8:4 - 6 are rendered by the RSV within inverted commas. For example, in verse 1 'all of us possess knowledge' and 'knowledge'; in verse 4 'an idol has no real existence' and 'there is no God but one'; in verse 5b 'gods' and 'lords'. The NEB and REB are basically the same as RSV in terms of their use of inverted commas, although the REB fails to use them to render 'gods' and 'lords' in 8:5. The NIV by contrast reverses the latter pattern by putting the 'gods' and 'lords' of 8:5 within inverted commas, whilst using none at all for 8:1 - 4. Admittedly, however, the NIV does offer an alternative footnote rendering of 8:1 "'We all possess knowledge', as you say." It is felt by a number of scholars that 8:8 may also have been a Corinthian slogan, yet none of the five translations so far named uses inverted commas for verse 8 to suggest a quotation from the Corinthians' letter to Paul. This is an area where caution needs to be exercised because the RSV and others are putting an interpretative gloss on the text by their selective use of quotation marks to indicate material which Paul *might* be quoting from the Corinthians' letter to him.

4 The RSV renders 8:5 as follows -

For although there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth - as indeed there are many 'gods' and many 'lords'

RSV thus translates εἶσίν as 'there may be' in v 5a, yet renders the same Greek verb in v 5b as 'there are'. What v 5 does appear to confirm is that when Paul uses εἶδωλον in v4, he is referring to a divinity of some sort, but one almost wonders whether the RSV translators are confused about the reality or unreality of εἶδωλα.

These verses 4 - 6 need to be assessed in their relation to Paul's overall argument, but before we can state the exegetical issues raised by these verses, we shall need to review two facets of the problem which emerged from our research of Greco-Roman background, namely the unreality and ambiguity of εἶδωλα.

### 6.3.2.1 THE UNREALITY OF *EIDOLA*

Regarding the two main clauses in 8 : 4, Gordon Fee (1987 : 370 - 1) has proposed that "the order in which the two sentences appear suggests that the Corinthians' main point is that an *eidolon* lacks any reality." It would not be difficult, if this is the case, to imagine how some Corinthians would then extend their argument to the effect that since an *eidolon* did not exist, then no one should feel any qualms about eating food which had been offered to these images in a temple setting, since these *eidola* were in fact non-existent. Similarly, we have seen already that there did exist the potential for misunderstanding between Paul and the Corinthians, based on their respective interpretations of the term *eidolon*. This possibility of a conflict of viewpoints will now be examined briefly.

It has already been established that current Bible translations and commentators clearly have struggled to know how to translate *eidolon* and this invites us to suggest how the Corinthians themselves might have understood and responded to Paul's use of this term as it appears in 1 Cor 8 - 10 and as he may also have used it in his previous letter or indeed during his 18 months' stay in Corinth. We have shown previously that the N T uses the term *eidolon* in a negative, polemical fashion to condemn believers' involvement with *eidola* whilst at the same time not actually or specifically attempting to define what it means by 'worship' of *eidola*. Moreover neither is there a clear attempt to portray or explain the actual relationship between *eidola* and divinities. The N T rather is content to mention *eidola* in consistently negative contexts such as being untrue, opposed to God, dead, dumb, lifeless, and sinful. In a broadly similar way, the Septuagint uses *eidolon* in the sense of a physical representation of a god or even as being equal to a 'pagan' god, but in both cases, involvement with *eidola* is condemned and there is a negative and critical portrayal. However, in its Greek pre-Christian sense, we concluded that the term *eidolon* was used in a positive, neutral or merely factual manner. It occurred frequently in the context of death and the world of the dead, to mean 'ghost', 'phantom' or 'apparition'. Very occasionally it was used with regard to a human image. The most significant discovery, however, was that in all of Greek literature, *eidolon* was only very rarely used of a representation of the divine. Its use as a descriptive term with reference to



cult-receiving images of gods was very unusual. The overwhelming usage of *eidolon* in the world with which the Corinthians would have been familiar was in its connection with the human, rather than the divine, and in its portrayal of unreality rather than reality, an image rather than the real thing.

How then might the Corinthians have understood Paul's use of the word *eidolon* and cognates in 1 Cor 8? Paul was trying to portray *eidolon* in the sense of a 'false god' but did his use of *eidolon* actually communicate his intent? We need now to view v 4 not from Paul's perspective but from that of the Corinthians, with their very different background, experience and world view. The general 'pagan' use of *eidolon* in connection with humanity rather than divinity, together with the pagan preference for *agalma* to translate divine image raises the possibility that Paul's use of *eidolon* in his previous dealings with the Corinthians, as well as in 1 Cor 8, may have caused confusion to the believers at Corinth. Paul clearly intended *eidolon* to have divine reference in 1 Cor 8. If, for the Corinthians, *eidolon* did not have divine significance, then they would see no harm in eating food offered to Paul's *eidola*, because *eidola* for them had neither real existence nor divine significance. After all, even in Ch 8 which probably represents Paul's clarification of his previous letter to the Corinthians, a Corinthian reading of verse 4 - οὐδὲν εἶδωλον ἐν κόσμῳ - may, in Corinthian terms, sound something like "a non-existent thing is nothing in the world" or "no non-existent thing exists in the world" or to re-interpret the RSV rendering "an idol [ie a non-existent thing] has no real existence." A 'non-existent thing' is an 'image' in the sense in which 'image' is contrasted with 'reality', and as such constitutes a familiar Greek usage.

After all, across the broad spectrum of pre-Christian Greek literature *eidolon* was a 'shadow' or 'phantom' and was precisely something which was nothing in the world, and as such represented unreality. If therefore some Corinthians did view *eidola* as signifying unreality, then they would have been in complete agreement with Paul that *eidola* were indeed unreal and therefore what was all the fuss about? The association of *eidolon* with humanity and unreality in the pre-Christian Greek mind thus may well have exacerbated the confusion in the Corinthian Church. Add to this the fact that these Corinthians lived in an environment in which the concept of *theos* was by no means clear-cut, and we can see the potential for ambiguity along the boundary line between the divine and the human. The very flexibility and fluidity of that line could have been complicated further by the existence of cults of heroes and Emperors.

Thus we propose that part of the Corinthian problem may have been that Paul and the Corinthians had genuinely different understandings of the same word - a classic case of cross-cultural communication conflict. Against this, of course, it could be objected that Paul does make considerable use of the O T in 1 Cor 10 : 1 - 13 and this, combined with his presumed teaching on 'idols' during his 18-month stay in Corinth, would have ensured that the Corinthians did in fact grasp Paul's intention in using the term *eidolon*. This we acknowledge, whilst at the same time contending that for the Gentiles, if not the Jews in

the Corinthian Church, Paul's use of *eidolon* either created genuine confusion or allowed them to underline their belief that *eidolon* meant unreality and that for them 'idol-food' was thus a non-issue. It is true of course that the O.T. *itself* could lead to the same confusion. O.T. polemic such as Ps.135 frequently supports the idea of the unreality and non-existence of the pagan gods. In contrast 1 Cor.10 claims that they are not 'nothing' but rather demons. Thus although Deut. 32:17 does refer to demons, the basic disparity was already there in the LXX. Paul's use of the term *eidolon* may thus, we suggest, have been deliberately taken up and used by some Corinthians to bolster their case for continued eating. In other words, bearing in mind the known occurrence of a previous misunderstanding between Paul and the Corinthians concerning 'idolatry' (1 Cor 5:9 - 13), we contend that Paul's use of the term *eidolon* could have opened the door for a genuine confusion or a deliberate and contrived misunderstanding on the part of at least some Corinthians.

### 6.3.2.2 THE AMBIGUITY OF EIDOLA

We have argued throughout Ch 4 that, as in the Torajanese case-study of modern Indonesia, so also in the Greco-Roman world, there were fundamental ambiguities regarding the nature of the *eidolon* and the nature of divinity, which in turn of course inevitably led to a range of opinion on the nature and boundaries of 'idolatry' itself. Whilst recognising differences in time, space and format between the Torajanese and Corinthian situations, nevertheless it is clear that there are fundamental similarities in the dynamics of the two. In the Torajanese situation, we observed the lack of a clear or consistent classification of the gods, the consequent ill-defined boundaries between 'gods', 'spirits', and souls of the dead and the resulting claim by some Christians that they were simply honouring the departed human rather than in any sense worshipping the divine. The existence of these ambiguities, boundary definition problems and conceptual differences in people's minds has led to a range of valid viewpoints concerning the nature, function and significance of images along the religious/social continuum. Thus all Torajanese have their own perspective on the nature and significance of the image, ranging along the spectrum 'equivalent to deified ancestor', 'embodiment of divine power', 'actual recipient of food offerings', 'socio-economic identity marker', 'photograph', 'memorial', 'decorative art object' and 'purely cultural'.

In the Corinthian context, much of scholarship has been directed to exegetical work on the Pauline teaching embodied in Ch 8 - 10. Moreover, the N T treatment of *eidolon* amounts to an unambiguous condemnation of 'idols' and of anyone involved with them, yet without reasoned argumentation. It has tended, therefore, to be assumed that the issue of *eidolon* is a straightforward one of white or black, right or wrong. Our background study has shown that this is a false assumption. The situation of the *eidola* addressed by Paul in 1 Cor 8 involved profound ambiguity in three particular areas -

### i) In Terminology

We have seen that the usual Greek term for a cultic image of a deity in a temple was *agalma*. Imperial images also were often called *agalmata*. Not all *agalmata* received cult, but on the other hand, not only *agalmata* received cult. Thus there existed no clear or unambiguous one-to-one relationship between terminology, type and cultic function. The potential for a range of interpretation of images is compounded by the fact that in the transfer of converts from Greco-Roman religion into the church, change in thought-process would not have been an overnight experience. Gradual transition and life in the 'overlap' would have been the norm.

Ambiguity existed not only with regard to images but also in terms of ancient perceptions of divinity itself. Each of the dining cults associated with Corinth - Asclepius, Demeter/Kore and Isis/Sarapis - had links with underworld divinities and the world of the dead/heroes. A great range of views existed on the divine-human continuum regarding the nature of Asclepius, for example. The 'holy men' of the Greco-Roman world similarly evoked a wide spectrum of divinity/humanity. The ambivalence of terminology for Imperial Cult was particularly acute away from Rome. Roman emperors did not use *theos* of themselves in speaking to their Greek subjects but the Greek subjects of the Emperor did use *theos*. Price contends that Imperial Cult in Greek cities remained very Greek and the issue must have arisen as to how the Greeks were to incorporate the image of the emperor into their own central values regarding divinities. We saw that according to Bowersock, educated folk distinguished between a real god (*deus*) and a divinized being (*divus*). The Greeks, however, had no equivalent of *divus*, so that for them, for example, *theou huios* may have been equivalent to *divi filius* but with a different meaning. Technically the equivalent of *divus* is θεῖος but that would sound the same as θεός. The potential for complexity, moreover, can be seen when we realize that the Oxford Latin Dictionary (Clarendon 1982) offers four meanings for *deus* 1) a god, 2) applied hyperb. to human beings, in respect of their achievements, happiness etc and to deified members of the imperial family 3) the statue or image of a god 4) a divine essence or being: the supreme being. The term *divus*, however, also means 'a god' or 'applied to a deified Emperor'.

### ii) On the Ground

At ground level, the scope for ambiguity regarding images was considerable in the Greco-Roman world. We have already seen in Ch 4 that there were physical ambiguities:

- portraits of the dead were to be found amidst images of emperors and gods
- some statues of emperors were given attributes of gods such as the corn and poppy emblems of Demeter
- images of emperors and gods were sometimes mixed together within a single temple.

### iii) In People's Minds

We noted previously that whilst Pausanias wrote 'the image is ....', the modern mind might rather express it 'the image represents...' We saw in Chapter 4 that a range of

perceptions existed in the ancient mind regarding Greek cult-images - as involving deity, as powerful fetishes in magical practices, as aids to devotion and as works of art. The ambivalent status of the Roman Emperor between human and divine was a complicating issue in the question of image perception. Some images were cultic; others decorative. We have noted J Chow's view that the elite at Corinth saw emperors as men, whereas commoners found it hard to distinguish emperors from gods, these two groups says Chow, possibly being related respectively to the 'strong' and 'weak'. Some scholars, notably Nock and Nilsson, have tended to view Imperial Cult as homage rather than worship, whilst others see it as having had a genuine 'religious' content. Little surprise, therefore, that such ambiguity yielded a wide range of viewpoints on the functions of Imperial images - as places of refuge to plead for safety, as media for divine portents, as possessing supernatural power, as signifying divine honours, as exercising political influence, as representing humanity, as ornamental and as possessing no abiding significance.

We observed in Chapter 4.1.1 that Hooker believed idolatry to be definable in terms of who says what about whom and that idolatry consisted of both the belief that an image was truly indwelt by a god and the practice of engaging in acts of worship on that basis. If that is the sort of definition of idolatry which Paul held, then it is not difficult to see why he would be in conflict with a wide range of alternative viewpoints in Corinth. Broadly-speaking, emperors were not considered 'divine' during their lifetime but a cult of Tiberius may have existed during his own lifetime in spite of his declared distaste for it. In such a case, it would not be surprising to find some Christians feeling they were merely honouring a living man rather than in any sense worshipping a deified Emperor. If 'images' evoked a broad spectrum of interpretation, then so did 'idolatry' itself and herein lay Paul's fundamental dilemma at Corinth.

Having seen the wide range of valid perspectives which the ancient world held regarding the nature and significance of images, we can now seek to assess Pauline intention and Corinthian responses in 8:4 - 6. A wide scholarly consensus exists to the effect that in v 4, Paul is quoting the arguments which some Corinthian believers had expressed in their letter to him, namely that "an *eidolon* is nothing in the world and there is no god but one". Paul is in basic agreement with both of these propositions. In trying to assess Paul's understanding of, and intent in using, *eidolon* in v 4, we face three possibilities -

- 1) Paul may have used *eidolon* in the sense of a physical image or representation, but such a visible image would indeed have been a physical reality whose existence could not be denied. Thus no one would deny the actual existence of a physical image, made of wood, stone or metal, 'in the world'. Of course it is possible that Paul may have been referring to *eidolon* in the sense of a physical image but simply agreeing with the Corinthians that such an image was nothing, ie had no abiding or real significance 'in the world'.

2) In view of the significance of heroes and Emperors in the first century Roman world, consideration needs to be given to the possibility that some Corinthians may have argued that they were attending cult-feasts simply to honour the human dead (*eidola*), whether beloved family members, past heroes or Roman emperors, and not to worship pagan deities. This range of beings, with all their attendant ambiguities, would certainly fit in with Paul's broad categories of λεγόμενοι θεοὶ εἴτε ἐν οὐρανῷ εἴτε ἐπὶ γῆς in v 5 and θεοὶ πολλοὶ καὶ κύριοι πολλοί in v 5b. If for some Corinthians these heroes and Emperors were in some sense honoured, then Paul might have deliberately selected the term *eidolon* to reflect the pre-Christian sense of the word to the Greek mind, namely shades, ghosts or apparitions, i.e. the 'unreal' world of departed souls, entered into during cultic memorial feasts. For such Corinthians, the feasts may well have involved commemoration or honouring of the departed rather than in any sense worship of deities.

3) Both the NEB and REB render Paul's use of εἰδῶλον in 8:4 by the phrase 'a false god'. This line of argumentation could be followed through in the context of 8:5 - 6. This case would follow two lines of reasoning -

a) Paul immediately follows his statement that 'an εἰδῶλον is nothing in the world' with the statement οὐδεὶς θεὸς εἰ μὴ εἷς "there is no God but one", with the implication that all other 'gods' are actually false or unreal. This line of argumentation is then followed up immediately by Paul's further reasoning in vv 5 - 6 as he seeks to assert a monotheistic position.

b) Since physical images did exist in temples, then Paul presumably was trying to say that it was the 'false god' represented by the visible, physical 'image' which did not in fact exist.

Christians of Jewish background would have been familiar with the idea of *eidolon* as meaning a 'false god', but for Paul directly to equate *eidolon* with 'false god' may well have been strange to a Corinthian believer with a pagan understanding of that term.

It is to vv 5 - 6 that we now briefly turn before attempting to reach some conclusions about this section 8:1-6. It has already been seen that there was considerable scope for a difference of opinion between Paul and the Corinthians, regarding the nature and significance of *eidola*. When we go on to consider Paul's use of the term *theos* in vv 5-6, the scope for ambiguity or unclarity is not necessarily removed. In verse 5, Paul refers to the gods as λεγόμενοι θεοί 'so called gods' - thereby implying doubt about the reality of these gods. Paul's use of the present, passive participle of λέγω indicates that these beings were being called 'gods' by pagans, but in view not only of what Paul has already said in 8:4 and also of what he will affirm in 8:6-7, it does seem clear that all of verse 5 refers not to what exists objectively, but to what exists subjectively 'for them', as it were, only because pagans still believed in such 'gods'. Barrett, commenting on v. 5, however, feels that "in this verse Paul appears to express no definite opinion [on the existence of gods]; it would exaggerate in one direction to suppose that he denied the existence of beings neither truly God nor human, but it would exaggerate in the other direction if we

were to take his 'there are' to affirm the reality of the beings mentioned." (1968: 192). Barrett's somewhat ambivalent presentation of Paul's intention in 8:5 appears to be the position of Robertson and Plummer (ICC 1911:167) who argue that the second εἰσὶν of 8:5 probably refers to actual existence and yet seem uncertain when they suggest that "it is perhaps too much to say that εἴπερ is used of what the writer holds to be true or probable, yet it certainly does not imply that the hypothesis is improbable: 'granted that' is the meaning." Verse 5 clearly has triggered a measure of controversy amongst commentators. Bruce (1971: 80, 96) stresses that other 'gods' and 'lords' are real in the *minds* of their devotees, while Orr and Walther take this a stage further by adding that *as gods*, they "exist only in the worship and thought of their believers." (Anchor Bible 1976: 233). Conzelmann (1975: 143) proposes Paul's view that these powers, whilst real to pagans, are not actually gods at all. Fee (1987: 372) agrees and asserts that the pagan gods "are 'so-called' because they do not have existence in the form their worshippers believe them to have." All of these scholars, however, agree that Paul, at the same time accepted the reality of supernatural powers which he claimed were not 'gods'.

This debate highlights the need to consider not only the meanings of individual words but also the general thrust of the Pauline argument. BAG presents εἴπερ as meaning 'if indeed', 'if after all', or 'since', but in the context of 1 Cor.8:5 it offers 'for even if'. The strong contrast suggested by this term is compounded by the strong term λεγόμενοι which BAG renders 'so-called' and notes a similar usage in the mystical writings of Hermes Trismegistus Bk.2.14 (*Discourse to Asclepius*), probably dating from the first to the third centuries C.E. and in which other 'so-called' gods are compared and contrasted with 'the only' god.

The main thrust of Paul's argument lies in 8:4 with his assertion that εἰδωλον is nothing in the world and that there is only one God. He then uses the strong terms εἴπερ and λεγόμενοι in 8:5 to show that the 'gods' and 'lords' of pagans are not in fact gods, however real they might seem to pagans. The apostle quickly underscores, by his use of 'ἀλλ' ἡμῖν, the huge contrast between Christian belief (8:6) and pagan belief (8:5). He then decisively contrasts the one God, the Father, with the 'many gods' of 8:5, and the One Lord Jesus Christ, with the 'many lords' of 8:5, thus re-emphasizing his argument from 8:4. Paul is careful to remind his readers that they exist within an eternal triangle - God, Christ and believer. In 8:6 he highlights the idea of *relationship* because in 8:7 he will begin a whole series of arguments based on *responsibility* within that community called the Church. Christ-centredness and community - consciousness, not individual viewpoint, must determine attitudes and actions regarding sacrificial food. What does emerge in 8:5 is that Paul refers here to a wide spectrum of beings, both in nature - λεγόμενοι θεοὶ, θεοὶ πολλοὶ and κύριοι πολλοὶ and in spatial location - εἴτε ἐν οὐρανῷ εἴτε ἐπὶ γῆς. This could include a wide spectrum of beings such as upperworld gods, underworld gods, Emperors, heroes, and even divinized ancestors to various

degrees. It is precisely this range of spiritual beings which was a feature of Corinthian religious life in the first century CE.<sup>24</sup> Thus although verse 5 in and of itself contains no categorical denial by Paul of the existence of other gods, nevertheless, when viewed in the context of vv.4-7, it does seem clear that Paul is denying the actual reality of *other gods* and upholding the Christian position of exclusive monotheism. He does not however deny the existence of other spiritual beings and this helps us to make sense of his sudden references to *daimonia* in 1 Cor 10. We also have to allow the possibility however that *to some Corinthian minds*, v 6 might have allowed henotheism i.e. belief in a single god without asserting that he or she is the only God. Some Greeks at least, for example, believed that Sarapis and Asclepius were universal gods and to some, therefore, the man-god, Christ, may have been just one more manifestation of the universal God. Judging from 8:4 and 8:6, both Paul and the Corinthians seem to have been claiming monotheism but it may not have been the same monotheism. Paul may have felt clear in his own mind about *theos* but it is by no means certain that these recent Corinthian believers shared the same conception.

Three crucial issues are emerging from 8:1 - 6:

1) Whenever Paul employs the Greek term *eidolon*, English translations simply beg the question. 'Idols', 'gods', and 'demons' are *our* interpretations of what Paul meant and leave no room for the possibility that what the Corinthians actually heard and understood by those terms was in fact quite different. Thus the terms *eidolon*, *daimonion* and *theos* were not absolute and unambiguous terms. A range of conceptions and understandings existed and there was clearly ambiguity regarding the relationship between *eidolon* and *theos*. A range of interpretation was possible. We cannot say that for the Corinthians, 'images' were inherently 'good' or 'bad', 'right' or 'wrong'. A variety of valid views existed. The relationship between *eidolon* and *theos* was ambiguous.

2) Whilst Paul was seeking to establish exclusive monotheism in 8:6, it is by no means certain that the Corinthians had the same concept of monotheism. The existence of different views concerning the nature of monotheism is suggested by a recent statement made by Owsei Temkin<sup>25</sup> -

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<sup>24</sup> PH Langkammer has noted that in the heathen environment of the early church, many lords, as well as many gods, were worshipped. He goes on to argue - "Ausserdem beachtete und verehrte man die 'Herren' mit den 'Göttern' auf einer Stufe. Das liest man übrigens auch aus 1 Kor viii 5 heraus". My Translation - "Besides they ~~honoured~~ and venerated the 'lords' on the same level as the gods. This incidentally one can also read in 1 Cor 8: 5". See : "Literarische und Theologische Einzelstücke in 1 Kor viii 6" in *NTS* 17 (1970 - 1) pp 193 - 197 esp p 193 . He goes on to argue that in 8: 5 - 6 Paul may have employed a formula which was already in circulation and may even already have been used by other missionaries.

<sup>25</sup> O Temkin *Hippocrates in a World of Pagans and Christians* (John Hopkins Univ Press Baltimore & London) 1991 Preface p xii.

Some attempt will be made at some specificity in the use of the words 'Christian' and 'Christianity', which, like 'pagan' and 'paganism' are liable to obscure the diversity behind them. The words 'pagan' and 'paganism' as used here, include all religious forms whose followers do not submit to a single, all-powerful God. Philosophers who, in theory, assumed the existence of one god without, in practice, giving up the cult of other deities, remained pagans in spite of their philosophical monotheism.

3) The existence of differences of viewpoint concerning the nature of *eidolon* and *theos* and the existence of differing conceptions of monotheism inevitably meant that the Corinthians would define 'idolatry' itself in a variety of ways. This is the nightmare Paul faced - a variety of feasible interpretations among the Corinthian believers. With so many variables and so many possible individual interpretations, Paul must have realised that there was no absolute solution to the issue of idol food. He knew that to make any impact on this problem he had no alternative but to argue from the standpoint of communal consciousness and consideration rather than from that of individual knowledge and interpretation. It is this tactic which Paul develops in earnest from 8:7 onwards.

### 6.3.3 CHAPTER 8: 7- 13

#### 6.3.3.1 Verse 7

Verse 7 of 1 Cor 8 clearly forms a distinct junction in the section and introduces a new departure in Paul's line of argumentation. We can immediately note two differences in his reference to γνῶσις as compared to his first mention of it in 8:1a. In 8:7a ἡ γνῶσις includes the definite article whereas in 8:1a, that definite article is missing. The RSV offers a perfectly legitimate understanding of this Greek idiom in 8:7a as "However, not all possess **this** knowledge". The presence of the definite article does suggest at least the possibility of a more specific type of knowledge than that in 8: 1a and refers to the content of 8:4 - 6. Not everyone at Corinth had the knowledge that "an εἶδωλον is nothing in the world and that there is no god except one" (v4) . Paul then goes on to explain in some detail that some of the Corinthian believers had for some time been, and still were, 'accustomed to idols' (RSV) τινὲς δὲ τῆ συνηθεία ἕως ἄρτι τοῦ εἰδώλου. (8:7). The term συνήθεια can mean 'habitual intercourse', 'acquaintance' or 'intimacy' (LSJ) or simply 'habit/custom'. Some texts offer the different term συνειδήσει in place of συνηθεία. The range of meanings of συνειδήσις covers such examples as 'knowledge shared with another', 'knowledge', 'consciousness', 'awareness' and 'conscience'. The main thrust of Paul's argument is that such believers were still so familiar with *eidola* that when they ate food, they ate it as 'food offered to idols'. In other words, to these people the *eidola* still had significance and to eat food offered to these 'idols' was, for them, in a real sense, involvement in idolatry, or as the RSV expresses it, "they eat food as really offered to an idol." The result is that their weak consciences are defiled. For them, the eating cannot be



separated, in their minds, from its idolatrous context and their conscience is damaged as a result. They have not yet reached consciousness of the 'knowledge' (8:4) which other Corinthian believers have already attained, namely that "an idol is nothing in the world and there is no god except one." The rendering of τοῦ εἰδώλου is again of interest and significance. The RSV translates it as 'an idol'. Fee, however, notes the singular form of *eidolon* and suggests that "the problem is not with idolatry in general, but with their devotion and allegiance to a given god." (1987: 379 n.18) Fee thus appears to conceive of *eidolon* not as an 'idol' but as a specific deity. Presumably it is the presence of the article that makes the difference for him. The confusion over this term *eidolon* is also seen in the comment of Grosheide regarding verse 4 (1953: 191) - "Idol was originally an image but it may also be the pagan god himself, and thus it is used here." The NEB and REB, perhaps reflecting uncertainty over the term τοῦ εἰδώλου in 8:7, translate it simply as 'idolatry', but just to add to the confusion, the NEB offers a footnote that "some witnesses read 'in whom the consciousness of the false god is so persistent'." The actual context of 8:7 is not certain but presumably the food was that referred to in 8:10 which was consumed in an εἰδωλείῳ - 'place or temple of idols'. The so-called 'weak' were thus actually involved in eating already, but because they had for long been accustomed to *eidola*, they felt them to be a present power and influence when it came to eating food offered to them. (8:7). Thus although the actual context of the eating of 8:7 is not clear, we do know that damage was already being done, in the sense that the consciences of the 'weak' were already being defiled. The RSV translates verse 7 as follows - "However not all possess this knowledge. But some, through being hitherto accustomed to idols, eat food as really offered to an idol; and their conscience, being weak, is defiled." The RV gives a very similar translation, whilst the NIV and REB develop the idea of what some believers think about eating. The NIV refers to those who are still so accustomed to idols that "when they eat such food they think of it as having been sacrificed to an idol." Similarly the REB mentions those who "still think of this meat as consecrated to the idol." The NEB expands even further - "even now they eat this food with a sense of its heathen consecration, and their conscience, being weak, is polluted by the eating."

At this stage, the text gives no indication that a distinct and clearly defined group/party/faction called 'the weak' existed at Corinth. All we are told by the apostle is

that some of the Corinthian believers had 'weak consciences'<sup>26</sup>, not that they formed a specific 'party' in opposition to the so-called 'strong'. Indeed the weight of evidence from the Greco-Roman world tends to suggest that a broad range of individual viewpoints<sup>27</sup> existed, rather than two specific groups in a state of conflict, one with the other.

### 6.3.3.2 Verse 8

Verse 8 of Chapter 8 is accurately translated by RSV as follows: "Food will not commend us to God. We are no worse off if we do not eat, and no better off if we do." A wide consensus of opinion exists to the effect that 8:8 may well constitute a quotation from the Corinthians' letter to Paul.<sup>28</sup> Certainly it is true that Paul uses the 'we' form in 8:8 which might indicate a quotation, along the lines of 8: 1 and 4. The overall thrust of the

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<sup>26</sup> The whole question of Paul's intention for the term συνείδησις has been the subject of considerable scholarly dialogue and debate. C A Pierce in his book *Conscience in the New Testament* (SCM Press, London, 1955) pp 42 - 3 claims that συνείδησις is concerned with a man's own acts: "it is not concerned with the acts, attitudes or characters of others." Pierce claims that it is always used for past acts and that all Pauline uses of the term follow this pattern. This latter assertion was then challenged by M E Thrall in "The Pauline Use of συνείδησις" *NTS* 14 (1967 - 8) pp 118 - 125. Thrall posits that Paul viewed conscience as performing in the Gentile world a similar function to that of the Law amongst Jews. (p 124) On this basis, she argues that conscience is seen by Paul "as providing guidance for future moral action, and also as being able to assess the actions of others." (p. 125) R A Horsley in his work "Consciousness and Freedom among the Corinthians - I Corinthians 8 - 10" *C.B.Q.* No 40 (1978) pp 574 - 589 has used Hellenistic Jewish, particularly Philonic, material to attempt to show that "the crucial link between *gnosis* and the liberty to eat idol-meat is thus the strong consciousness convicted by Sophia Logos." (p 585) He equates Pauline συνείδησις with one's inner consciousness or awareness, and not with the modern English sense of 'conscience'. (p581) Thus the Corinthians, says Horsley, saw 'idol meat' in an internal personal sense in which their strong consciousness gave them liberty to partake. For Paul, however, his yardstick centred not on individual consciousness but rather on relationship between people (p589). We suggest, however, that such gnostic arguments are not necessary to explain the plain link between knowledge that 'idols are nothing' and the conviction therefore of being free to eat. P W Gooch attempts to distinguish between a sense of self-awareness - a consciousness of one's guilt or innocence - in Ch 8, and a sense of 'bad feelings' in Ch 10. See P W Gooch " 'Conscience' in 1 Corinthians 8 and 10" *NTS* Vol 33 (1987) pp 250 -1. What none of these scholars seems to take account of, however, is the essential complexity and ambiguity of the idol food issue itself, together with the range of valid viewpoints on all sides. We contend that the 'weak conscience' issue was indeed real and not hypothetical. 1 Cor 8: 10 - 13 indicates the seriousness with which Paul took eating as endangering the faith of individuals and the unity of the church, and his concern to tackle idol food by a series of communally based arguments, one of which was the 'conscience' line of reasoning. J A Davies thus argues in 1 Cor 8 that "the ethical conscience of the individual must always be subject out of love to the ethical consciousness of the community." (p 16) See J A Davies "The Interaction Between Individual Ethical Conscience and Community Ethical Consciousness in 1 Corinthians" in *Horizons in Biblical Theology* 10,2 (1988) pp 1 - 18. In 10: 29b-30, however, Paul is equally aware of the danger that weak consciences could dictate behaviour. 'Conscience' is a tool which Paul uses to handle the dispute but it is not a perfect solution to the problem of the hotly disputed question of *eating* 'idol food'. The issue of 'sacrificial acts' in 1 Cor 10: 1 - 22 is much more clear cut and not surprisingly Paul makes no use of the conscience argument in that passage.

<sup>27</sup> With regard to the 'strong' and 'weak' in Rom.14:1-15:13 there is no specific mention of 'idol food' and it is for this contextual reason, as well as for reasons of lack of space, that we have deliberately avoided the confusion that could arise from a detailed study of that Romans passage.

<sup>28</sup> See Bruce F F *1 & 2 Cor* 1971:81; Fee G *The First Epistle* 1987: 383; Barrett, *A Commentary* 1968: 195; Grosheide *Commentary on the First Epistle* 1953: 194. H Conzelmann, however, takes the view that "we have here a positive declaration on Paul's part." (*I Corinthians* 1975: 148)

verse points towards the idea that food is a neutral item in the relationship between believers and God. Food, and the eating of it, in and of itself, does not affect, let alone determine, a believer's relationship with God. Barrett makes a distinction between the first clause of v.8 which he attributes to the 'strong' Christians in Corinth, and the second and third clauses which Barrett sees as Paul's correction to the Corinthian position. Barrett attempts to reconstruct the 'strong' argument in the following way (1968: 195) "If we eat sacrificial food we lose nothing of our Christian status or Christian reward; if we do not eat, but abstain as the weak Christians do on rigorist grounds, we gain no advantage." Paul thus shows in 8:8 that the converse is also true and he thereby seeks to correct the attempt of the strong to justify their own eating of sacrificial food. Another way of viewing 8: 8, of course, is to say that it represents not only Paul's correction of the position of the 'strong', but also the very position of the weak themselves. Although Paul, in the immediately following verses, is clearly addressing the so-called 'strong' believers, the possibility nevertheless remains that the original letter from the Corinthians to Paul was from the whole church or from the weaker members. The 'strong' had most to lose by raising the issue.

Thus food *per se* is a neutral commodity and a matter of indifference to God. It may well, therefore, have been the case that some believers claimed Christian freedom in this issue of eating sacrificial food. Moreover, although 8:8 may appear to be neutral and impartial, it is nevertheless feasible to read it as portraying the position of the weak in showing that it is actually better to refrain from eating sacrificial food. If we read it in this way, then we conclude that both vv 7 and 8 are actually criticising those who eat. It is thus our contention that Paul, throughout verses 7-13, is developing an aggressive anti-eating polemic which can actually be seen in every single verse of that section.

### 6.3.3.3 Verse 9

Paul introduced his concern over the weak in 8:7 and we contend that in 8:8, the apostle, whilst confirming the basic neutrality of food *per se*, nevertheless presents his own modification of the position of the 'strong' or reflects what the weak themselves had been presenting to Paul, namely, that there was nothing to be gained by eating 'idol-food' and nothing to be lost by abstention. In verse 9, Paul then develops the theme of his concern for believers with weak consciences. Verses 9 ff constitute Paul's explanation of why some people are in spiritual danger over this issue of sacrificial food.<sup>29</sup> It needs to be noted at

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<sup>29</sup> In the midst of research, such as that of Willis and Theissen, which emphasises social factors at work in 1 Cor 8 - 10, we note a necessary reminder from Murray that "*in both cases* [1 Cor 8 and Rom 14] the weakness of the weak had respect to abstinence from certain things *on religious grounds*" (John Murray "The Weak and the Strong". *Westminster Theological Journal* Vol 12 (1950) p.141.) Murray's conclusion is that legislation cannot be built on the basis of prohibiting the strong nor of pandering to the weak. God, he says, has given us a "norm of right and wrong." (p 153) on which to make and enforce laws. What he appears to fail to appreciate, however, is the sheer complexity of dealing with the idol-food issue in 1 Cor. 8- 10. It was not a clear-cut case, as our background research has shown.

this stage, of course, that the term 'strong' is one which has been coined by scholars and not one that appears in the actual text itself. It is in verse 9 that Paul raises the issue of ἐξουσία and it is to this term that we now turn our attention. According to *LSJ* Vol 1 s.v., ἐξουσία can carry a range of meanings - 'power, authority, to do a thing', 'abuse of authority, licence, arrogance'; 'office, magistracy'; 'body of magistrates', 'authorities'; 'abundance of means, resources', 'excessive wealth'; 'pomp'. Indeed a brief survey of this term in *LSJ* indicated that these meanings are widely attested in a number of types of literature from 4th Century B.C.E. to 4th Century C.E. In the case of 8:9, RSV offers the following translation:

Only take care lest this liberty of yours somehow become a stumbling block to the weak.

RV likewise translates ἡ ἐξουσία ὑμῶν αὐτή 'this liberty of yours' although offering a footnote alternative of 'power'. Likewise NEB and REB employ the term 'liberty', whilst NIV prefers the phrase 'the exercise of your freedom'. Perhaps not surprisingly, commentators have adopted a range of terms in their attempts to tackle this term ἐξουσία.<sup>30</sup> The sudden appearance of this term allows the possibility that the Corinthians were already familiar with Paul's use of the word or indeed that the Corinthians themselves had already used the word in their letter to Paul. If, as seems likely, some Corinthians had been arguing that they had ἐξουσία to eat sacrificial food, then they presumably based their claim on one or both of two possible grounds:

(1) That since food was essentially neutral in terms of relationship to God, then in a general sense, they had 'freedom' to follow their own desires in eating 'sacrificial food'. This would be founded on their arguments reflected by Paul in 8: 1a, 4 and 8a.

(2) That they possessed a specific 'right', 'authority' or 'office' which gave them the right, perhaps indeed the obligation, to continue to be involved in eating sacrificial food at certain cultic festivals. The idea of there being some sort of specific ἐξουσία which was possessed by certain Corinthians is strengthened by Paul's use of ὑμῶν αὐτή. Certainly

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<sup>30</sup> Fee (1987: 384 - 5) offers two words for ἐξουσία namely 'freedom' and 'authority', but feels that the NIV use of 'freedom' is too weak. Fee thus prefers 'authority' as more appropriate for Paul's warning in 8: 9. Conzelmann however, opts for Paul's addressing the 'strong' in terms of their 'freedom', (1975: 148) as does Bruce, although the latter does also give an alternative 'right' for ἐξουσία (1971: 81). Barrett, however, remains convinced that the term means or includes 'authority' to eat any kind of food. (1968: 195). B Winter in *Seek the Welfare of the City* in the series *First-Century Christians in the Greco-Roman World*. (Eerdmans 1994) has recently argued that ἐξουσία means 'right' in 1 Cor 9 and thus refers in 1 Cor 8: 9 to a specific civic privilege which entitled Corinthian citizens to dine on 'civic' occasions in a temple, most probably those related to the Isthmian Games (p 166). This theory, however, appears to rest on a totally Roman background to 1 Cor 8 - 10. Winter argues that "the problem about which the Corinthians wrote had not arisen when Paul was in Corinth" on the basis that Paul cites no 'tradition' delivered by him to them cf 11: 2. This, however, is to argue a case from silence. He also maintains that Demeter and Asclepius were unlikely to have been the background to 1 Cor 8 - 10 since 'rights' were not in question there and 1 Cor 8 - 10 does not mention a healing context. Again this appears to be argument from silence.

Paul does not question the validity of their ἐξουσία in 8:9. What he does question is their exercise of such ἐξουσία at the expense of, and to the detriment of, those with weak consciences. Verse 9 thus sets forth a warning (second person plural imperative) that the freedom or right of some believers must not be exercised to the point of constituting a stumbling block to the weak. This danger, first noted by Paul in 8: 7, is explained by the apostle in the following verses 10 - 13 in some considerable detail.

### 6.3.3.4 Verse 10

Apart from Paul's statement in 8:7 of the fact that some with weak consciences actually were eating and their consciences were being defiled, the only concrete indicator of the specific background of vv 7-13 appears in 8:10. Paul now explains how in practice a 'weak' person can suffer harm. The γάρ of v 10 introduces and exemplifies a specific situation which illustrates the danger Paul has just highlighted in v.9.<sup>31</sup>

The Greek text of 8:10 requires careful consideration at this point in an attempt to decide what is fact and what is merely inference or even speculation. The person clearly addressed by Paul is the one having knowledge - τὸν ἔχοντα γνῶσιν, the so-called 'strong'. The 'anyone' or 'someone' - τις seeing the person with knowledge, must be the believer who had a weak conscience. The text, whilst we admit that it forms a conditional sentence and as such has been held by some to indicate a hypothetical situation, nevertheless informs us about four things in terms of background:

- (1) The 'strong' person was visible, in this particular setting, to the eye of the 'weak' person. (Aorist Tense - ἴδῃ)
- (2) The 'strong' person was in εἰδωλείῳ - 'place or temple of εἰδωλα'.
- (3) The 'strong' person was in an attitude of κατακείμενον - 'reclining at table' - though this term according to LSJ Vol.1 s.v. can also mean 'lie down', 'lodge', 'reside', 'be idle'.
- (4) The 'weak' person was in danger of eating 'idol food' in this context and such eating was already a problem at Corinth. (8:7) In other words, it was not a hypothetical possibility, but rather an actual reality.

Translators have made various attempts to represent the Greek text of v10. RSV renders it:

For if any one sees you, a man of knowledge, at table in an idol's temple, might he not be encouraged, if his conscience is weak, to eat food offered to idols?

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<sup>31</sup> Regarding the setting of 8: 10 we agree with Bruce Fisk (Bruce N Fisk "Eating Meat Offered to Idols: Corinthian Behaviour and Pauline Response in 1 Corinthians 8 - 10" in *Trinity Journal* 10 NS (1989) pp 49 - 70) that it constitutes "a real, even commonplace situation in the Corinthians' experience" (p 68). However, in view of 8:11-13, we cannot accept Fisk's further comment "that Paul was there [in 8: 10] making reference to what were spiritually harmless temple meals, as he sought to apply his ethical principles." (p 68)

Other versions make 'conscience' the subject of the passive verb, 'be emboldened'. (RV, REB, NEB). The act of eating is variously described - 'eating in an idol's temple' (NIV); 'sitting at meat in an idol's temple' (RV); 'sitting down to a meal in a heathen temple'. (NEB and REB).

Some of the discoveries which we have made in Greco-Roman background study will now be applied to the major facets of the text of 8: 10. We shall summarize our previous research findings under two headings - the location of eating and the nature of eating.

#### **6.3.3.4.1 Location of Eating: The *EIDOLEION***

One of the ultimate issues we face regarding the temple is whether or not, from the Corinthian believers' perspective, it actually involved them in worship. Paul evidently felt this was a real danger for the Corinthians, as he points out in 10:14, but whether the Corinthians viewed it in such a way is debatable, for as MacCulloch long ago pointed out - "In the popular sense of the word, 'temple', while it is connected with worship, is not usually a place within which the people worship. The priests alone enter it, the laity may worship only within the precincts, if even there."<sup>32</sup> On the other hand, writing in 1969, Corbett argued that ordinary people actually entered Greek temples more frequently than has been supposed by scholars and that in Greek usage, the person paying for the victim or offering the sacrifice was normally present at it and received a share of the victim - "in addition, and more important, the sacrifice implied sharing a meal with the god".<sup>33</sup> Significantly, Corbett also points out that no two Greek temples were identical in plan and that many temples were sub-divided into different sections to cater for the cult of more than one god or demi-god. (1969: 152). Thus we must seriously question the idealized concept that behind 8:10 lies a single temple building dedicated to a single Olympian god. The reality, even if we accept the idea of a single and identifiable temple building, is far more complicated than we might suppose, and perhaps even more so in the case of Roman temples. For example, Suetonius records the occasion when Claudius was attracted by the smell of a banquet, having been conducting judicial business in the Forum of Augustus. Claudius promptly left the tribunal, entered the temple and reclined on the banquet couches of the Salii along with the priests. (Claudius, 33) Thus at the same time, and within the same location, 'secular' and 'religious' business simultaneously was conducted. Within the context of the Roman temple, a whole range of civic and political activities was

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<sup>32</sup> MacCulloch J A Article on 'Temples' in Hastings (Ed.) *E.R.E.*, Vol 12 T & T Clark. 1921 p 237.

<sup>33</sup> Corbett P "Greek Temples and Greek Worshippers: The Literary and Archaeological Evidence" in *Bulletin of Institute of Classical Studies* No 16 University of London. 1969 p 150.

performed in the near proximity of the gods.<sup>34</sup> Indeed, Stambaugh claims that many Roman temples were built partly as an obligation to a god but also largely to celebrate military victories and to demonstrate the prestige of builders, generals and benefactors.<sup>35</sup> This political function of temples was particularly strong in the provinces away from Rome. Roman temples incorporated banking, markets, museums, libraries, landmarks and meeting places. The wide range of people likely to frequent Roman temples is clear. Stambaugh simply reflects what has already emerged from our research, namely that "...the prospect of seeing a procession or sacrifice, made the temples some of the most attractive places for lounging and loafing in the city." (1978: 587). Even for the more serious participants, attendance at table in a temple was multi-purpose. For example, Roman temples were frequented by 'collegia'. Stambaugh comments on a collegial temple at Ostia after 143 C.E. - "Such temples, then, served not only for the worship of the gods, in this case the patrons of the 'collegium'. They also served as a community centre and private club, where a good meal could be found on specified occasions, and where agreeable company could be found at least once a month." (1978: 591)

Those who reclined at table in *eidoleia* thus represented a very wide spectrum, both in their reasons for being there and in their conception of the significance of their eating. This applies not only to Greek and Roman temples but also to oriental cults. Temples to Isis erected by collegia in Rome (CIL 6.348) had a definitely social, as well as religious, function. It needs to be constantly borne in mind that the term *eidoleion* can refer to a 'temple' or 'place' of idols and the archaeological uncertainty regarding the mid-first century CE functioning of dining rooms at Demeter/Kore and Asclepius thus allows the possibility that dining did take place in open areas or in tents around Corinth. The Isthmian Games, located in the Isthmia outside Corinth, would thus be a real possibility for such large-scale dining where the 'strong' would easily be visible to the 'weak' observer. We know that at one stage cult-caves, probably of Dionysus, included dining rooms.<sup>36</sup> We also have evidence of a fountain west of the Temple of Poseidon which indicates a cult to the dead or to gods of the underworld.<sup>37</sup> We know also that "a second altar [to Poseidon] was constructed [with reference to the Isthmian Games] some time in the first century A.D. not much earlier than the time of Paul's visit." (Broneer 1962: 10)

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<sup>34</sup> See, for example, the multi-functional nature of Roman temples as portrayed in Suetonius *Augustus* 21.2 & 29; Dio 55: 10; Res Gestae 5: 12; Suet. *Caligula* 24 & 44.2; Ovid *Fasti* 5. 561 - 568,6.307 - 8; Tacitus. *Annales* 13.8; Plut *Quaest. Rom* 270D; Propertius 2, 28, 44-46. Games were often celebrated, as for example in Livy 36.36.6 and Cicero *Ad Fam.* 7.1.

<sup>35</sup> John E Stambaugh "The Functions of Roman Temples" in *ANRW* 2.16.1 (1978) p 583.

<sup>36</sup> O Broneer "The Apostle Paul and the Isthmian Games" in *Biblical Archaeologist* Vol.25 (Feb. 1962) p.15.

<sup>37</sup> O Broneer "Paul and the Pagan Cults at Isthmia" *HTR* 64 (1971) p181.

Thus a wide spectrum of temple situations may have formed the backcloth to Paul's warning in 1 Cor 8: 10, but the reference to athletics in 1 Cor 9: 24 - 27 does suggest the real possibility of an Isthmian link. Moreover although some religious monuments had indeed ceased to exist at Isthmia before Paul's arrival there, nevertheless, Broneer believes that "their function may have been perpetuated by others." (1971: 187) What is said by Broneer to be undoubtedly the case is that "by the time of Paul's visit, the cult of the imperial family had radically affected religious thought and practice in Greece, and the Isthmia had become a centre of emperor worship." (1971: 184-5).<sup>38</sup> Although we cannot establish with absolute certainty the identity of the *eidoleion* mentioned by Paul in 8: 10, imperial cult must be a strong contender with its athletic games associations and large-scale dining at or near temples and other 'places of idols'. In any case, even identification of the physical location alone is still of limited value in itself as an indicator of cult details, the ambiguity and uncertainty of which Broneer suitably laments

Interpretation of material objects that have to do with religion is always difficult, not only because in most instances we do not know what they mean or how they were used in the cult rites, but also because the makers and users themselves had only vague conceptions of their intent. Scholars' penchant for orderly exposition and clear definition can be misleading for an understanding of the religious life of a given period because they pretend to make clear what was anything but clear to the ancients. (1971 : 170)

Before we begin to analyse the viewpoints of Corinthians on eating in an *eidoleion* (8: 10), it is worth pointing out, in the context of meanings of cult rites, that Paul himself may have had little detailed perception of these occasions. Witherington proposes<sup>39</sup> "What is crucial here is what Paul and other Jewish Christians *assume* transpires in a pagan temple. It is doubtful that Paul had ever gone into any of the pagan temples in Corinth and analysed what was happening. His polemics are based on his beliefs grounded in the Hebrew Scriptures, and on things he may have heard from others but not on some sort of definitive study of pagan religion." He continues, regarding Roman sacrifices - "Care was taken that no strangers, foreigners or in some cases no non-Romans were present to contaminate the proceedings. It is thus possible that Paul may have seen the act of pagan sacrifice from afar, but he would probably not have been allowed to scrutinise the process closely, much less what followed in the temple or its adjacent buildings thereafter." (1993: 243)

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<sup>38</sup> This view is confirmed by Allen B West in his *Corinth VIII Part II Latin Inscriptions* 1931, p.54 with reference to the inscriptional mention of Juventianus, probably high priest at the Isthmian sanctuary around 80 C.E.

<sup>39</sup> Ben Witherington III "Not So Idle Thoughts about *EIDOLOTHUTON*" in *Tyndale Bulletin*, 44.2 (1993) p241 n10.



#### 6.3.3.4.2 The nature and significance of Eating

We shall briefly summarize our major findings regarding communal meals in the context of 8:10 which is the only concrete detail in 1 Cor 8 available to us, concerning the practicalities of eating. We have seen already that a series of ambiguities existed and that boundary distinctions were difficult, if not impossible, to draw. For example, at the Demeter site in Corinth, Bookidis has established that Building T may have had a chthonic significance which, because of the finding of curse tablets, raises the issue of links with underworld gods and the dead. The eating room at the Demeter site was separate from the area of temple, stoa and theatre, and the area of images, according to Pausanias, was small and concealed. Most worshippers presumably had never entered that area and the possibility thus arises that ambiguity surrounded the extent to which food was considered actually *sacrificial* in nature. The lack of windows in the Demeter dining rooms presumably meant that the 'weak' could only see the 'strong' by being present within the room itself. We have observed a similar locational ambiguity regarding the Temple of Asclepius at Corinth. Admittedly C K Williams remains unsure whether the restored dining rooms were actually in use in 50 CE, but apart from that issue, the location of the dining rooms between temple area and recreational area opens up the possibility that these rooms may have been used by incubants for 'religious' reasons and/or by visitors for 'social/secular' reasons. Gooch even feels that the dining rooms at Lerna had no official or cultic role whatsoever in the Corinthian Asklepieion, which of course means that some participants at least might not have rated the food as 'sacrificial'. Moreover, a possible area of ambiguity arises because some did not believe Asclepius to be a real god but rather originally a human being who never became an Olympian god. The Athens Asklepieion even suggests links with sacrifices to the dead. This range of conceptions, together with the fact that many even of the incubants themselves were only there for the 'healing', raises the whole issue of whether or not some of the participants considered themselves to be involved in any sense in an act of divine worship of the sort Paul may have had in mind. In any case in practice there was little difference between rites to heroes and those to the chthonic gods. In Aristides' account we saw how Asclepius told him to sacrifice to whichever gods were necessary and then to Asclepius and then to give food to fellow pilgrims. We know, however, that there was evidence of attendance by large numbers of spectators and one wonders therefore what was the perceived nature of the food consumed by those large numbers. Ambiguities, boundary issues and conceptual variations thus suggest a range of viewpoints among participants at the Asklepieion concerning the significance of their eating. Not surprisingly, it is the context of the Asclepius cult which caused Oster to put forward the suggestion that Paul was dealing with two different temple situations - a more 'socially' orientated one in Ch 8 and a 'religiously' directed one in Ch 10. This theory we doubt, firstly on the grounds that the biblical text itself reveals no such distinction, but secondly because we have already seen that such a distinction was basically invalid in the ancient world in any case. It was precisely **because of that**

indivisibility that Paul had a real problem on his hands in that Corinthian Church over the issue of 'idol-food'. It was the very multi-functional nature of cultic-festivals that enabled participants to select the particular 'non-religious' ingredient which they felt would best lend itself to the justification of their own presence and participation on such occasions.

Yet another variety of ambiguities, boundaries and conceptual differences occurred in perspectives on the cult of Isis/Sarapis. We have seen, for example, the great range of locations for Sarapis feasts, not only in temples but also in homes, such as that in P Oxy 1755 where it remains uncertain whether *oikos* was part of Apion's own house or a part of the temple itself. The nature of Sarapis himself was subject to a range of opinion. According to Aristides, Sarapis was the greatest of all gods in his oneness and universality, whilst to Apuleius, Isis was universal, all - embracing divinity. Yet Sarapis is reckoned to have had chthonic traits also. Sarapis could function as both guest and host, thus being ambiguous as recipient of sacrifices. In any case, the 'social' and 'religious' functions of eating in the cult of Sarapis were inseparable. Milne even believes that the feast of Sarapis possessed no religious character, whilst Youtie contends that curiosity seekers also attended such occasions, no doubt with different motives from those of many of the other participants.

Whilst direct detailed evidence of Imperial Cult worship procedures is lacking for Corinth itself, we know that the cult functioned in such diverse locations as temples, gymnasia, halls and athletic locations. The potential for a range of views on the meaning of meals was enormous even within the single context of athletic games, for the latter involved a range of ingredients, each of which could have been claimed as central in significance, namely the 'social', the 'political', the 'religious' and the 'national'. A wide range of participants at such multi-functional games would inevitably produce a generous range of reasons from which each individual could pick and choose, so as to argue that their involvement did not in fact smack of idolatrous worship.

Temple meals were thus multi-dimensional and multi-functional in nature. As Gooch concluded in his dissertation, there were *many* contexts in which sacred food was consumed, whether in the home or the temple. As we have seen, communal meals functioned in a wide variety of ways and were perceived differently by different people, whether as opportunities for conversation, as celebrations of special events, as part of everyday living, as markers of social distinctions, as social requirements for advancement, as a sign of friendship, as opportunities for indulgence and carousing or indeed as occasions to offer thanksgiving to the gods. In each of these perspectives, the ancient mind held together the 'social' and the 'religious'. Indeed the two were inseparable and would have caused no problem or tension until traditional pagan religion was confronted by the exclusive monotheism of Paul's Christianity. People felt they could attend meals for a *wide* variety of motivations. That much is clear, for example, from Dio's 27th Discourse on the reasons people attended 'symposia'. The work of Borgen and Trebilco has also

demonstrated that a *wide* range of attitudes existed among Jews and Christians towards meals and pagan cult in general.

We contend that amongst those 'reclining at table' in 1 Cor 8:10, a wide range of perspectives - not just the two viewpoints of the 'weak' and the so-called 'strong' - would have been represented. Meals were multi-functional and as such, each person could major on a specific ingredient, justifying his/her participation on that basis. The nature of the sacrifice will be considered particularly in the context of 1 Cor 10:14-22, but ambiguity clearly was likely regarding whether, or to what extent, the *consumed* food actually was *sacrificial* in nature. Add to that the ambiguity regarding the nature of the recipient of the offering (human or divine?) and the consequent activity of participants (worship or merely honouring?), and we will see once again, that the nature and significance of the act of 'reclining at table' in 8: 10 was by no means a clear-cut issue - its significance very much lay in the eye of each beholder and participant of the meal.

We maintain that the situation behind 1 Cor 8-10 was not merely a time-bound problem at Corinth alone, concerning the rights of Roman citizens to attend banquets, as proposed by Winter. Although Winter presents a plausible case, he reaches the point of arguing that "the lengthy argument to which Paul resorted in 8:1 - 11: 1 shows not only the need to demolish the substantial case which they [the Christian citizens] had mounted, but to affirm that the Christian's task was to seek the physical and spiritual welfare of others, as Paul himself had done in imitation of Christ. (11: 1)". Such a statement, however, seems to assume that the 'strong' were in the wrong to eat and that the issue was capable of analysis in black and white terms. The question of Roman citizens' rights may well have been a contributory factor, but we maintain that the fundamental dynamics of the problem - ambiguity, boundary definitions and conceptual differences - make this issue timeless. The problem recurred throughout the early centuries of the Christian Era and still recurs today because fundamentally it is an open-ended and highly complex issue. There has always been, and still is, a wide range of valid viewpoints. The problem is more complicated than any single theory can elucidate - the question of civic rights, we suggest, may have been part, but not the whole, of the problem. Thus whilst we do not reject the interpretation of ἐξουσία as 'right' in 1 Cor 8:9, we contend that some Corinthian believers had built up a viable and valid case for continuing to exercise their 'freedom' to eat 'idol-food'. Indeed it is likely that a whole range of Corinthian Christian interpretations existed and that each was felt to be valid by those who held that position. Into this minefield of interpretations of 'reclining at table' in 8:10, Paul brought his own views. 1 Cor. 8 thus involves the central issue dealt with by Paul in Chapters 8 - 10, namely the eating of sacrificial food in a temple context. By paying attention to the nature of images, sacrifices and communal meals, as far as they can be known, rather than by attempting exegesis in a vacuum, we have argued that a range of valid opinion existed among the Corinthians concerning the act of communal eating in terms of its nature, meaning and perceived significance. We shall now continue our examination of 8:10 - 13, in an attempt

to decide what position Paul himself was actually attempting to set forth regarding the eating issue in 1 Cor.8 as a whole.

### 6.3.3.5 Verses 11-13

Whatever the extent or limitations of Paul's own knowledge of cultic practices in mid-first century CE Corinth, the reality of the situation was highly complex, with a wide range of valid and feasible positions on the spectrum of accommodation/separation for Christian believers. In a real sense the problem had no simple Yes/No, white/black, withdraw/participate solution. Paul thus faced a minefield of many interpretative communities within the Corinthian Church. The very term 'community', however, suggests groups or parties, and it is such a concept for which we see no actual evidence in the text of 1 Cor 8 - 10. Certainly we see no evidence for two clear-cut factions - the 'weak' and 'the strong' - at war with one another. Rather we see Paul facing a complex range of viewpoints and struggling to handle a number of variables which made the whole issue very complicated and open to a broad range of valid interpretations by individual believers. We contend that the only feasible way that Paul could 'solve' the unsolvable was to shift the treatment of the 'idol-food' issue from an individual to a communal basis. It is for this reason that, throughout 8:1 - 11:1, Paul argues that each person's 'knowledge' is not the basis on which to act. The apostle thus chooses a number of lines of argument, and it is 'consideration for the weak' to which he gives particular attention in Ch 8:7 - 13. In verse 10b, Paul makes ἡ συνείδησις αὐτοῦ 'his conscience' the subject of the passive verb οἰκοδομηθήσεται which he has previously used in 8:1 in the positive sense of 'building up' or 'edifying'. RSV, as well as LSJ (s.v.), translates it as 'will be emboldened', but LSJ notes that 8:10 uses the term 'in a bad sense', and this is confirmed by the continuation of Paul's argument into vv11 - 13. As we have seen, there were many in the ancient world who rejected pagan gods and felt justified therefore in attending temple meals. Indeed it is possible that some 'strong' Corinthian Christians had reasoned with Paul that, by their attitude of accommodation to, and involvement in, temple meals, they actually were bringing enlightenment and edification to those with weak consciences. Bruce fails to raise this issue in his brief commentary, but Barrett (1968: 196) puts forward his view that "this verse probably reflects a claim made by the strong Corinthians: If I set a good example by publicly taking part in an idolatrous feast, knowing that the food is just food and nothing more, our less advanced Christian brothers will be encouraged, built up, edified, to do the same thing." Paul, however, proceeds to show just how negative and destructive is the exercise of the so-called 'freedom' of the strong to participate in temple meals. It is in the following verses 11 - 12 that Paul spells out the serious consequences of eating for a believer with a weak conscience. Paul now picks up again from where he first highlighted his concern in 8:7 and proceeds in vv.11-13 to spell out the severe dangers of 'reclining at table'.

The term 'conscience' - συνείδησις - appears in 8:7 and reappears in 8:10 and 8:12. Its range of meanings, according to LSJ (s.v.) covers 'knowledge shared with another', 'consciousness/awareness', 'consciousness of right or wrong doing'. As Paul develops his argument into verses 11 - 12, we see a shift of emphasis along at least two lines -

1. The subject of the main part of verse 10 is ἡ συνείδησις αὐτοῦ - 'his conscience' and it is this conscience which might be built up to eat 'idol-food' by the example of the 'strong'. In vv11 - 12, however, there appears to be a shift of emphasis. In verse 11, the subject of the destruction is the one 'being weak' or 'who is weak' - ὁ ἄσθενῶν. If Paul had wanted to say that the 'conscience' was destroyed, he presumably would have used a feminine subject or participle construction related to συνείδησις, but instead he appears to put an emphasis on the whole person being destroyed. RSV has "this weak man is destroyed" 8: 11. Verse 12 combines both ideas - that of the person *and* the conscience. οὕτως δὲ ἁμαρτάνοντες εἰς τοὺς ἀδελφοὺς καὶ τύπτοντες αὐτῶν τὴν συνείδησιν ἄσθενοῦσαν εἰς Χριστὸν ἁμαρτάνετε - My Literal Translation - "Thus sinning against the brethren and wounding their conscience, being weak, you sin against Christ."

2. Those who claim that συνείδησις is best translated 'consciousness' or 'knowledge', rather than 'conscience' in a moral sense, are left with the problem of explaining the seriousness of Paul's words in vv11 - 13 and his clear conviction that the consequences of eating by the 'strong' do impinge greatly upon the moral and spiritual dimensions of other believers' lives.

Verse 11 has caused a measure of controversy among scholars. What is clear is that it is not the γνῶσις *per se*, which caused the damage, but rather the act of eating in a temple which derived from that γνῶσις. Paul continues the metaphor in 8:11 by selecting the passive verb from ἀπόλλυται - 'is destroyed' - which is the very reverse of the passive verb form in 8:10 οἰκοδομηθήσεται - 'will be built up'. Basically two points are made by Paul in v 11-

1. The 'weak one' - ὁ ἄσθενῶν is destroyed. The Greek verb ἀπόλλυμι is a strong word suggesting the ideas of absolute and utter loss, destruction and demolition. Barrett simply says, without elucidation, that the weak man, led into sin, "perishes". (1968: 196). Although Grosheide calls v 11 a strong statement, he renders 'destroyed' in the sense of 'comes to sin', which would appear somewhat to play the issue down. (1953: 197) Extremes of views are represented by Bruce, on the one hand, who is convinced that "it is not the man's eternal perdition, but the stunting of his Christian life and usefulness by the 'wounding' of his conscience when it is weak that Paul has in mind" (1971: 82), and by Conzelmann, on the other, who maintains the extreme view that "in Paul, however, ἀπολλύται must not be taken in a weakened sense as moral ruin; here as elsewhere it means eternal damnation (so also in Rom 14: 15). It is true that Paul is addressing himself to the strong in terms of warning and is speaking of a possibility; but in so doing he of

course presupposes that idea that the Christian, too, can lose his salvation...". (1975: 149 n 38). We conclude that the Greek text, in and of itself, does not reveal for v 11, Paul's specific intended meaning, but that what does emerge clearly, is that Paul treats the danger as very real and very serious. Fee for one is convinced that the problem is not hypothetical and that it involves eternal loss. (1987: 387).

2. As though Paul's severe language in 8:11a were not sufficient, he then presses home two further issues in 8:11 b. Firstly he once again underlines the fact of Christian community - as opposed to the realm of individual knowledge and interpretation - by using the term ὁ ἀδελφῶς. The fact of being in community carries heavy responsibility on the horizontal level. Secondly, Paul stresses the vertical level by showing how the community only became possible through the death of Christ.

The weight of verse 11, even in and of itself therefore, portrays Paul's extremely serious view of the 'strong' eating 'idol-food' in the presence of the 'weak'. In practical terms, Paul would thus appear to be saying that even if there was the slightest or remotest fraction of a possibility of a 'weak' believer being present, then the strong ought not to eat in a temple.<sup>40</sup>

It is in verse 12 that Paul then consolidates his twin themes of the horizontal relationship with the brothers and the vertical relationship with Christ. If a believer with a weak conscience is encouraged to eat in an idol's temple against his conscience, then such an act for that believer constitutes sin. In v 12 Paul presents such an act as being one in which the so-called 'strong' are actually sinning against the brethren and wounding the consciences of the weak. Paul's deep concern for the community is shown by his shift from singular (v 11) to plural (v 12). Thus the 'strong' sin because they cause the 'weak' to engage in a temple meal which, in the minds of the weak, is a sinful activity. Such a situation in which sin is multiplying among 'strong' and weak thus inevitably makes Christ's death for sin a mockery, and thus Paul labels the attitude of the 'strong' as sinning εἰς Χριστόν 'against/towards Christ' (v 12).

The seriousness of Paul's view is further underlined in v 13 where Paul switches to the first person singular pronoun. We note three points with regard to Paul's determination never again to eat meat if it should be a cause of stumbling to the weak -

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<sup>40</sup> We agree with Fee that although food may be presented as a matter of indifference, although 'weak' consciences do have to be considered and although the 'strong' do appear to have had 'rights', nevertheless "...the section as a whole has the net effect of prohibition". (G D Fee *The First Epistle* 1987: 378) This is somewhat different from the view of scholars such as K.K. Yeo, "The Rhetorical Hermeneutic of 1 Corinthians 8 and Chinese Ancestor Worship" *Biblical Interpretation* Vol 2 No.3 (Nov. 1994) pp 294-311, who has recently argued that Paul's rhetoric of knowledge and love generates a rhetorical process whereby all parties can talk and listen to one another for the sake of edification (p.300). In a sense, Yeo is right when he contends that Paul does not attempt to give an easy answer of 'yes or no' in 1 Cor.8 (p.310) and that Paul does not resort to "absolute prohibitions concerning idol-meat eating" (p. 308). If Yeo had considered 1 Cor.10, however, he would presumably have had a few exegetical problems with vv14-22 though of course we must allow that one cannot read Ch.8 in view of Ch.10, for this prejudices the issue of whether there is a conflict. Certainly we can agree with Yeo that "Paul's strategy is to deal with the more basic issue of the nature of the gospel..." (p.309).

1. Paul introduces the term κρέα and raises the confusion for Conzelmann (1975: 150 n 42) as to whether Paul is referring to sacrificial meat or to all meat. We suggest that Paul once again adopts an extreme position to underscore the extremely heavy responsibility which a believer has towards his fellow believers.

2. Paul's use of extreme language is indicated again by his use of a double negative οὐ μή, compounded by the phrase εἰς τὸν ἀῶνα, to show that he would never ever again, under any circumstances, eat in a temple if it were the cause of the stumbling of a weak brother.

3. Once again, the double occurrence of the phrase τὸν ἀδελφόν μου - 'my brother' - highlights the communal nature of the church and the need for the 'strong', or indeed any believer, to look beyond their own selfish interests and consider others.

#### 6.4 PAUL'S VIEWPOINT IN 1 COR. 8

At this stage, we note the emergence of three main conclusions, based on our exegesis of 1 Cor 8 against the backcloth of the Greco-Roman and Oriental cults most likely to have been in Paul's mind as he put pen to paper. In proposing these conclusions we have sought to pay attention to detail in both text and background and yet to see the broad and general sweeps of the argument as well. We believe both approaches to be essential. Of one thing we can be certain - this present analysis of 1 Cor 8 - 10 has absorbed far more time and energy than it ever took Paul to write his entire letter to the Corinthians. If we lose sight of that fact, then we might also lose sight of the wood for the trees.

(1) We have already established through our study of cultic background that the issue of temple meals for Christian believers was not only contentious but also highly complicated, involving the real possibilities of different understandings of terminology, of inconsistencies and of wide variation of practice. The broad range of feasible and valid individual interpretations was caused by the existence of ambiguities, boundary blurring and the problem of indivisibility, and conceptual differences along the divine/human continuum. Such a combination of variables led to complexity and a situation in which a wide range of valid individual perspectives existed within the Corinthian Church. We contend that either Paul was aware of the minefield into which he was being drawn or the Corinthians had outlined the various possible positions in their letter to the apostle such that he responded in 1 Cor 8: 1 b "we know that all of us possess knowledge". Paul must have realized that the problem was not capable of resolution on the basis of any single individual's knowledge and interpretation. It was for that reason that the apostle developed a series of arguments based on communal welfare and general principle. The argument for the protection of weak consciences was thus a major plank in Paul's attempt to deal with the issue because it caused the individual to place greater value on love for another than on

arguing his/her own case on the grounds of knowledge of what cultic meals involved and signified.

(2) The main thrust of 1 Cor 8 does appear to be Paul's attempt to respond to the position adopted by the 'strong', although this so-called 'strong group' may well have represented a wide range of viewpoints even within itself. Likewise we have no evidence that the 'weak' constituted a specific or clearly defined faction or group within the church. All we can say is that a broad range of viewpoints existed and that for the 'weak', temple dining still carried idolatrous, and therefore unacceptable, connotations. Paul describes these believers as possessing a 'weak conscience' (8:7), as τοῖς ἀσθενέσιν 'the weak' (8:9), as ἡ συνείδησις αὐτοῦ ἀσθενοῦς ὄντος 'his conscience being weak' (8:10), as ὁ ἀσθενῶν 'the weak one' (8:11), and as αὐτῶν τὴν συνείδησιν ἀσθενοῦσαν - 'their weak conscience' (8:12). The temptation would be to conclude that because these believers possessed 'weak' consciences, then they were *ipso facto* weak in faith. The reality at ground level may well have been that some of the weak did realise that an image in itself had no significance and did believe that there was only one true God, but precisely because of that, they wanted to cut all ties with their past pagan associations. These were the very people who wanted a whole-hearted embracing of their newly discovered faith. For these people there was a fear of demons which caused them to reject pagan meals and Paul himself appears to adopt this position in 1 Cor 10: 20 f. Conversely many so-called 'strong' could not be said to have been strong in faith because many attended meals for social gain or prestige and may have demonstrated little or merely nominal attachment to Christian faith. Some may have been strong in political, social or economic terms but weak in terms of Christian faith and love. Some of the 'strong' and wealthy, however, may have recoiled from temple meals because of their desire to separate from all pagan associations. Some may have been weak materially but strong in faith and wanting to separate from paganism. Other weak people, materially, might have felt no spiritual significance in images and feasts and therefore involved themselves wholeheartedly. Some so-called 'strong' may have participated in pagan feasts not because they did not believe in idols, but because they had ulterior social or economic motives for doing so. This issue of temple meals involved a huge range of positions and interpretations. No single factor determined a person's response within any sort of predictable category. Hence the weakness, ultimately, of Theissen's socio-economic determinism. As we mentioned in Section 6.1.3, Theissen's theory is too rigid, inflexible and simplistic to fit the reality and sheer complexity of the situation revealed by our background research. It was individual interpretation which made the issue of sacrificial food such an intractable one for the Corinthians and for Paul.

The apparent visibility of the 'strong' by the weak (8:10) suggests that the recent archaeological tendency to see 'open dining areas' perhaps linked to athletic games locations, may well be not only plausible but indeed quite likely. Certainly we reject the



view of Hurd,<sup>41</sup> and of Gooch in his thesis, that the weak were hypothetical. Hurd used the occurrences of 'if' in 8:10 and 10:27, 29 to argue that "the really striking fact is that in 8:10-13 and 10:28,29, the 'weaker brother' is completely hypothetical and indefinite....." Hurd contends that "all in all, it appears that Paul created two hypothetical situations involving a pair of hypothetical 'weak' Christians solely as a way of dissuading the Corinthians from eating idol meat." In reply we would claim an actual reality behind 8:7, whereas Hurd feels that "only in 8:7 - 9 is there any slight degree of definiteness: 'Not all possess this knowledge'. But the reference is general and leads into the hypothetical discussion in 8: 10 - 13." We believe Hurd's argument to be weak at this point, so that whilst we do agree with him that the weak were probably not in any sense a group or faction, nevertheless we oppose Hurd's idea that the weak did not exist.

(3) Scholarship has been divided over the years concerning the issue of the apparent conflict between Paul's teaching in 1 Cor 8 and that in 1 Cor 10:14-22. In 8:1 - 13 Paul appears to agree that *eidola* are nothing in this world and that there is no God except one. He thus seems to allow temple eating in Chapter 8 as long as weak believers are not made to stumble by the 'strong'. By contrast, in 1 Cor 10:14 - 22, temple cult is wholeheartedly condemned as involving communion with demons and believers are forbidden involvement. Letter partition theories often create more problems than they solve, and we have already criticised the view that Ch 8 is about 'social', whilst Ch 10 about 'religious', meals. A close reading of 1 Cor 8, however, does reveal not Paul's allowance of temple eating or even his grudging toleration of it, but rather we contend, his probable rejection of it. Every verse in 7 - 13 includes a point about the damaging effect of eating on the weak believer:

v 7 'their conscience, being weak, is defiled'

v 8 'We are no worse off if we do not eat, and no better off if we do'

v 9 'stumbling - block to the weak'

v 10 'might he not be encouraged, if his conscience is weak, to eat food offered to idols?'

v 11 'the weak man is destroyed'

v 12 'Thus sinning against your brethren and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ'

v13 'lest I cause my brother to fall'

Thus our contention is that whilst verse 9 might appear to grant conditional permission to the 'strong' to eat temple meals, yet the overall thrust of 8:7 - 13 is highly negative, repeatedly underlining the very serious consequences of such eating. Which of the 'strong' in large gatherings of participants from a range of social classes would ever be able to guarantee that at least one weak believer would not be present at a temple meal?

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<sup>41</sup> J C Hurd *The Origin of 1 Corinthians* Mercer Univ Press 1983 p 125 First published by SPCK (London) 1965. Hurd does however concede - and herein we see his inconsistency - that "we may presume, as Paul presumed (8.7), that some Corinthians were less secure in their new faith than others" (1983: 125).

The 'strong' readers of his letter might have interpreted 8:9 as a grudging permission from Paul, though of course, rhetorically speaking, it does not have to be 'grudging' *because* it is undermined by the 'community' principle so forcefully laid down by the apostle. Given the weight of the other verses, and given Paul's rhetorical style in gradually moving from indirect to direct statements,<sup>42</sup> we contend that Ch 8 reveals Paul's rejection of, or at least strong disapproval of, Christian participation in temple meals.<sup>43</sup> His argument reaches a climax in 10: 14 - 22.

## 6.5 THE FUNCTIONS OF I COR. 9:1 - 10:13

### 6.5.1 INTRODUCTION

It is our fundamental contention that Paul's practical dealing with the various manifestations of 'idol food' is located in 1 Cor. 8:1-13 and in 1 Cor. 10:14 - 11:1. However, we do not regard 1 Cor. 9:1 - 10:13 as unrelated to the apostle's practical exhortation. On the contrary, 9:1 - 10:13 is a unified and integral part of his argument in 1 Cor. 8-10. Far from being a digression<sup>44</sup> or an interpolation, this section reveals a number of strands of Paul's argument and is indeed crucial to the transition between 8:1-13 and

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<sup>42</sup> See for example, my chapter on Paul's plea for the release of Onesimus in unpublished MA *Freedom and Bondage in the Thought of St Paul* Univ of Sheffield 1991 esp. pp.107-8. I argued that Paul used a series of ambiguous, but cunningly subtle, ways of bringing pressure to bear on Philemon towards some form of manumission for his slave. I argued that two of the chief controlling elements in Paul's rhetorical style in *Philemon* were the veiled wielding of his apostolic authority and the overriding need for relationships to be transformed by the power of the Gospel. I shall argue in Section 6.5.2 not only for a dual function for 1 Cor.9, but also that apostolic authority *and* Gospel considerations were crucial armaments in Paul's rhetorical arsenal. The apostle, we suggest, used both techniques in dealing with the awkward situations he faced in *Philemon* and in *Corinthians*. Both letters exhibit a similar technique of persuasion and reflect the general comment made by Roetzel on Pauline letters - "Although the letter was for Paul the only mode of conversation between separated persons, it was more. It was an extension of his apostleship." See C.J. Roetzel *The Letters of Paul - Conversations in Context* 1983 p.39.

<sup>43</sup> The choice seemingly offered by Paul in 8:9 was thus in effect no choice at all. I am grateful to my Supervisor, Dr. L.C.A. Alexander, who in the course of comment on this hypothesis, recalled a rabbinic story concerning the study of Greek Wisdom: "What does it say of Torah? Thou shalt meditate therein day and night." Therefore find a time that is neither daytime nor night-time, and *then* study Greek wisdom." In other words, 'Yes of course you can - except that it is impossible.' See Babylonian Talmud b. Menahoth 99b. where ben Dama asked R. Ishmael (also in Tosefta Aboda Zara I.20 - R. Joshua). (Material quoted by S. Liebermann *Hellenism in Jewish Palestine* 1962.) The idea that Paul in 1 Cor.8 actually was prohibiting his Gentile converts from *eating* in pagan temple precincts is shared by Ben Witherington III, though he argues this on the grounds that Paul was implementing the four stipulations of the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15:20,29. See "Why Not Idol Meat" in *Bible Review* No.10 (1994) esp. pp.39, 42-3.

<sup>44</sup> Typical of our own view is that held by Charles Kennedy "The Structures of 1 Corinthians 8-10" SBL *American Academy of Religion Abstracts* 1980. Abstract 426 (C.A. Kennedy - Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University). Kennedy takes the view that "Chapter 9 does not have to be re-assigned to another hypothetical letter; it becomes an integral if somewhat protracted comment to the argument's development".

10:14 - 11:1.<sup>45</sup>

The picture which has emerged from our consideration of Corinthian cultic activity is one of great complexity. On top of that, we do not know whether the predominant cults operative in the 50's C.E. were Greek, Roman, Oriental or a combination thereof. What *has* emerged, however, is that in all of these cults, a number of phenomena can be identified, the combined effect of which was to produce a wide range of viable and valid interpretations of what was actually involved in the nature and perceived significance of images, sacrifices and communal meals. Those phenomena have been named as ambiguity, boundary definition problems caused by the basic indivisibility of ancient life, and conceptual variations regarding what constituted divinity and what constituted humanity. The combined effect of these variables in any given situation was to produce a wide range of feasible individual interpretations. In other words, there was no simple Yes/No answer to the question of Christian participation in cults which involved sacrificial food. Although, therefore, the Torajanese cults of 20th Century Indonesia differ in time, space and detail from those of 1st Century Corinth, yet the basic dynamics of the two situations show remarkable similarities. Just as modern missionaries have been baffled in Toraja regarding the extent to which believers ought to involve themselves in traditional cultic gatherings, so also we contend, Paul was aware, or had been made aware, that the issue was not a black and white one and was not capable of a resolution on the basis of any single individual's knowledge and interpretation of the nature and significance of cultic activity. The problem was a veritable minefield of conflicting, yet viable, interpretation. It is by bearing in mind this complicated background material that we can begin to discern and understand the approaches which Paul adopts, and the arguments which he develops, in 9:1 - 10:13, as preparation for his final and practical exhortations in 10:14 - 11:1.

Realising that the issue of Christian involvement in cultic meals could never be solved on the basis of any one person's 'knowledge' concerning 'food sacrificed to idols', Paul develops the 'weak argument' of 8:7-13 into a lengthy series of arguments in 9:1 - 10:13, each of which will attempt to cause individuals to look beyond themselves and

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<sup>45</sup> Wuellner has argued similarly that Paul's digressions, far from being interruptions and/or irrelevances, are actually "illustrative of his rhetorical sophistication and that they serve to support his argumentation". p.177. (Wilhelm Wuellner, 'Greek Rhetoric and Pauline Argumentation in *Early Christian Literature and the Classical Intellectual Tradition*. In Honorem Robert M. Grant Ed. W.R. Schoedel & R.L. Wilken. Théologie Historique 53 Paris. Editions Beauchesne 1979 pp.177-188.) In particular he concurs with our view that in 9:1 - 10:13 Paul is preparing the Corinthians for the challenge of 10:14-22. By contrast, some scholars have taken the position that Chapter 9 is completely out of place. So J. Héring, *The First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians* (London: Epworth, 1962) p.75; W. Schmithals, *Gnosticism in Corinth* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1971) pp.92f., 334. Others have expressed more moderate views. Thus C.K. Barrett, whilst seeing no need for partition, contends that the letter indicates here a digression and an extended period of composition - *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (A. & C. Black, London, 1968) p.200. H. Conzelmann holds the opinion that the freedom discussed in Ch. 9 is not the same as that in Ch. 8 and that this therefore raises questions about the state of the text - *1 Corinthians* (Hermeneia, Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1975) p.151.

therefore beyond their own entrenched knowledge, position, attitude and individual interpretation/viewpoint. The apostle shifts the focus of attention away from the 'impossible' area of individual interpretation and fixes the spotlight on those things which are greater and far more important than the individual's 'knowledge'. We thus contend that 9:1 - 11:1 is intimately, indeed inextricably, linked to 8:1-13, as Paul adopts a variety of communal arguments to combat the sheer diversity of individual opinions in the Corinthian Church. Indeed the basis from which Paul argues in Ch. 9, regarding the setting aside of freedom/rights, goes right back to 8:1-3. Our argument concerning those verses is supported by Charles A. Kennedy in his attempt to show that Paul adopts the technique of Mishnaic argumentation in 1 Cor. 8.<sup>46</sup> With reference to 8:1, Kennedy suggests that "the "knowledge" (*gnosis*) that we all have really amounts to an opinion. It is knowledge based on personal experience." He goes on to argue that Paul's emphasis in 8:2-3 is not on the love of God but on the relationship between the individual and the community, between the selfishness of one's own opinion and the inclusiveness of a love relationship. Paul thus deliberately adopts a series of cunningly conceived, and carefully reasoned, arguments which we shall now consider somewhat briefly before moving to a more detailed examination and exegesis of 10:14 - 11:1.

### 6.5.2 CHAPTER 9:1-18

Traditionally scholarship<sup>47</sup> has been divided into two camps on the function of 1 Cor. 9 -

1. Those who see the Chapter as Paul's attempt to defend the authenticity of his apostleship against the accusations of his opponents.
2. Those who view Chapter 9 as Paul's statement of his rights as an apostle - rights which, for the sake of the Gospel, he is willing to forgo. Under this view, Paul serves as an example of someone willing to set aside his rights/freedoms for the sake of the Gospel, rather than risking the danger of being an obstacle. Paul thus puts himself forward as a living illustration for the Corinthians to emulate. *They* also ought to be ready to forgo the right/freedom to eat 'idol-food', so as not to be a stumbling block to weaker brethren in the

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<sup>46</sup> Charles A. Kennedy "1 Cor. 8 As a Mishnaic List" in Jacob Neusner Ed. *Vol. 2 Christianity. Brown Studies in Religion. Scholars' Press. Atlanta, USA, 1989 pp.20-21.*

<sup>47</sup> Willis not only holds to the unity and integrated nature of Chapter 9, but maintains that it does not function as an apostolic defence. Rather it is a personal example of "the renunciation of rights in free service." (p.40) See Wendell Willis 'An Apostolic Apologia? The Form and Function of 1 Corinthians 9' *J.S.N.T.* 24 (1985) 33-48. By contrast Lamar Cope ("First Corinthians 8-10: Continuity or Contradiction?" in *A.T.R. (Supplement) 1990 Vol. 11 pp.114-123*) misses the issue of 'rights' and can offer only the conjecture that "if it [Chapter 9] is connected to 8 at all, it is by the theme of weakness found in both chapters." (p.116). In contrast again, G. Fee admits that there may be an element of Paul setting himself up as an example of forsaking rights in Ch. 9, but Fee's overwhelming conviction is that Paul is very definitely under attack and is defending the authenticity of his apostleship (*The First Epistle 1987: 393, 409*).

church.<sup>48</sup>

Our contention is that there is no need to opt for an either/or solution to Chapter 9's function. Both lines of argument are adopted by Paul in Chapter 9. In 9:1c and d, Paul appeals to two factors which he believes confirm the authenticity of his apostleship, namely, the fact that he himself has seen Jesus and the fact that the Corinthian Church itself had come into existence through Paul's Gospel work. Indeed the Corinthians were the seal - ἡ σφραγίς - of Paul's apostleship. The view has been expressed by some scholars that the attacks on Paul's apostleship did not begin until the period of the writing of 2 Corinthians and the RSV does indeed tend to give the impression that the criticism could be hypothetical - "This is my defense to those who would examine me" (9:3). The form ἀνακρίνουσίν is, however, a dative plural masculine participle present active and does suggest that the criticism/scrutinising of Paul's apostleship was indeed an ongoing reality in the present. Paul's apparently sudden raising of this issue of apostleship in 9:1-3 can be explained in three possible ways -

1. Because there actually was criticism of his claims to apostleship and Paul needed to deal with such assaults on his status, especially as it affected his relationship with the Corinthian Church.
2. Because apostleship was a necessary starting-point for Paul's discussion of rights in 9:4-14.
3. Because Paul wanted to re-assert his apostolic authority over the Corinthian believers both to re-inforce his stern words in 8:1-13 and to prepare them for his even stronger exhortations in 10:14-22. Such a tactic is discernible, for example, in Paul's exhortations to Philemon<sup>49</sup> where Paul begins with a very positive appraisal of Philemon's faith and love. (Philemon 4-7). He then abruptly says in verse 8 that he is appealing to Philemon rather than commanding him. Yet why even mention the word 'command', unless it is a subtle and veiled way of reminding

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<sup>48</sup> The essence of this view is captured by Gerhard Friedrich "Freiheit und Liebe im ersten Korintherbrief" *Theologische Zeitschrift* Jahrgang 26 Heft 2 (Mar-Apr 1970) pp.81-98. Friedrich with reference to the apostle states - "Aber er macht von diesen ihm zustehenden Rechten keinen Gebrauch (9, 12.15). Die Grösse seiner Freiheit besteht gerade darin, dass er auf sein Recht verzichtet" p.95. My translation: "But he makes no use of the rights to which he is entitled. The greatness of his freedom lies especially in this, that he refrains from all these rights." Friedrich then explains the message which Paul by example is trying to get across to the Corinthians - "Darum sieht er in seinem Verzicht nicht eine Beschränkung, sondern einen Akt der Freiheit." p.95. "Therefore he does not see this renunciation as a limitation but as an act of freedom."

<sup>49</sup> See Chapter on Philemon in my unpublished M.A. dissertation - Derek Newton *Freedom and Bondage in the Thought of St. Paul* Univ. of Sheffield 1991. The idea of 1 Cor. 9 being a tactic to lighten a very strong tone, as temporary relief before stern admonition, has been put forward very recently by Ben Witherington III *Conflict and Community in Corinth: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians*. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1995, p.191, Witherington in fact sees the whole thrust of 1 Cor. 8-10 as being Paul's opposition to the claim of the 'strong' for temple meal involvement. The 'strong' would have had strong incentives to accept such invitations, particularly if offered by patrons, who would have been grossly offended by a spurning of any such requests for attendance (p.229).

Philemon of his apostolic authority over the slave-owner? Paul then proceeds to apply cunning psychological pressure on Philemon in thinly-veiled threats and pressures - an 'ambassador' v.9; a 'prisoner of Christ Jesus' v.9; my child Onesimus v.10; 'sending my very heart' v.12; 'I would have been glad to keep him with me' v.13; 'in order that your goodness might not be by compulsion' v.14; 'no longer as a slave but more than a slave, as a beloved brother' v.16; 'so if you consider me your partner' v.17; 'charge that to my account' v.18; 'to say nothing of your owing me even your own self' v.19; 'I want some benefit from you in the Lord' v.20; 'prepare a guest room for me' v.22. Every verse is loaded with subtle exhortation and implicit threats, based on apostolic authority, so that Paul, nearing the end of his letter, can release his blunt imperative to Philemon - 'Confident of your obedience, I write to you, knowing that you will do even more than I say'. v.21. Paul may well be insisting on Onesimus' unconditional release.

Paul's veiled wielding of apostolic authority may underlie 1 Cor. 9 in a similar way, as Paul gathers his verbal weaponry in preparation for the climax of his argument in 10:14-22. After all, Paul was not only an apostle but an Asian, familiar with the Asian preference for veiled and indirect communication techniques and for gradual movement from positives to negatives, from indicatives to imperatives.

In addition to functioning as a defence of, and reminder of, Paul's apostolic authority, 9:1-18 also functioned as an extended illustration of Paul's willingness to set aside personal rights and freedom for the sake of others and supremely for the Gospel. Just as Paul developed the need for consideration of the 'weak' brother in 8:7-13, so he seeks in 9:4-18 to direct the Corinthians' attention away from each individual's knowledge, interpretation and viewpoint on 'idol-food', and towards consideration for the Gospel. Realizing the minefield of feasible individual interpretations on 'idol-food', Paul thus attempts to deal with the dilemma of 'idol-food', firstly by using the 'weak brother' argument in 8:7-13 and now secondly, by asserting that individual rights and freedoms must be set aside at all costs rather than hinder the work of the Gospel. Paul has tried to tackle the problem by introducing an argument from ethical responsibility in Chapter 8, and his next weapon in 9:4-18 is that of the centrality of the Gospel of Christ in *compelling* believers to look beyond themselves - it was Paul's only hope in the sheer complexity of the 'idol-food' issue where each person could claim a valid case for his or her own particular interpretation and viewpoint concerning cultic involvement.

Paul's argumentation in 9:4-18 is detailed and lengthy but follows a discernible pattern. In 9:4-7, Paul puts forward a series of questions to establish the rights of an apostle, namely the right to eat and to drink (v.4), the right to be accompanied by a wife or a sister as wife (v.5) and the right to refrain from working for a living (v.6). In v.7, Paul then shows how nonsensical it would be for a soldier to serve at his own expense, for a person to plant a vineyard without eating any of the subsequent fruit, or for someone to care for a flock of sheep without receiving some of the milk from that flock. In verse 8

Paul underlines the fact that his illustrations are not merely human inventions to suit his message, but are set forth in the Law of Moses. This he explains in verse 9 by a reference to Deuteronomy 25:4, the command not to muzzle an ox when it is treading out the grain. Paul then immediately follows this by asserting that these words were written surely for our sakes - ἡ δὲ ἡμᾶς πάντως λεγεί; δι' ἡμᾶς γὰρ ἐγράφη ... (v.10a). The agricultural metaphor continues as Paul explains that both plougher and thresher rightfully can expect a share in the final harvested crop. Having begun with an O.T. example of the ox, Paul then translates his plougher/thresher example into his own current mid-1st Century C.E. context. Thus the apostle reminds them that since he was the one who had sowed spiritual seed among the Corinthians, then he ought to have some physical/material benefit from the very church he had planted. (v.11). Indeed in v.12 Paul notes that others were sharing in this right and therefore that he himself had an even greater right to such material help - εἰ ἄλλοι τῆς ὑμῶν ἐξουσίας μετέχουσιν, οὐ μᾶλλον ἡμεῖς; Although we cannot be sure who the 'others' actually were, the main point of verse 12 is twofold -

1. Paul is underscoring his right, as apostle and founder of the Corinthian Church, to their material support.
2. Having asserted this right, Paul then makes a stunning statement which in a sense runs contrary to his argument in verses 11 & 12a, namely that in spite of the validity of his claim to support, nevertheless he is ready not only to renounce this right but also to endure all things, rather than give hindrance to the gospel of Christ. It is thus in verse 12b that Paul issues a challenge to the Corinthian believers.

Paul has already warned them in 8:7-13 about their need to consider the weak and in vv.11-12 particularly, about the consequences of eating 'idol-food' in terms of the work of Christ. 8:11-12 indicates that what concerns Paul is not that the weak dislike the temple eating-habits of the 'strong' but that the weak are actually being damaged in their spiritual life. Not only that, but such action constitutes sin against Christ Himself (v.12). Thus, following a lengthy introduction in 9:1-11, Paul, far from digressing in an unconnected way, actually returns to his argument of 8:7-13 by showing the need to forsake rights in the interests of the Gospel (9:12a). Having thus completed Cycle 1 of his illustrative material in 9:4-12a, Paul states his crux argument in v.12b and then moves into a shorter Cycle 2 in vv.13-14 in order to re-emphasise the same basic message.

The illustration which Paul employs in 9:13 begins with the question οὐκ οἴδατε ὅτι - 'do you not know?' The following facts relate to rights in temple service and it is here in v.13 that Paul comes his closest in Ch.9 to the concrete issue of meals in a temple context. The text itself indicates that those engaged/employed in τὰ ἱερά<sup>50</sup> 'eat from the

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<sup>50</sup> According to *The Analytical Greek Lexicon Revised* Ed. Harold K. Moulton. Zondervan 1978 (s.v.), this term, in its appearance twice in 1 Cor. 9:13, is to be translated 'sacred rites'. The term is located in two contexts by *A Greek-English Lexicon of the N.T.* Bauer, Arndt and Gingrich, 1958, s.v., namely pagan temples and also the temple at Jerusalem, including the whole temple precinct with its buildings and courts.

temple [τᾶ] ἐκ τοῦ ἱεροῦ ἐσθίουσιν. Paul then elaborates that those who attend or serve (παρεδρεύοντες) at the altar (τῷ θυσιαστηρίῳ), 'share in the sacrificial offerings' (RSV) (τῷ θυσιαστηρίῳ συμμερίζονται). Although Paul is using this case as illustrative material to make the point in v.14 that those who proclaim the gospel should receive their living by the gospel and that this was a command of the Lord, yet we need to pause to consider Paul's choice of the temple - altar - sacrifice context. Barrett (1968: 207) has put forward the intriguing point that Paul's 'Do you not know...?' of 9:13 implies that the Corinthians ought to have known what Paul was going to state and that "this suggests that the reference may apply to pagan practice, though it does apply to Jewish also..." Barrett renders the verse - "Do you not know that those who officiate in holy things eat the things that come from the holy place? that those who attend upon the altar have their share together at the altar?" If Barrett is correct in his assertion that Paul may have pagan sacrifice in mind here, then the apostle appears to be saying that certain people serve at the altar and receive sacrificial offerings in return for their services. Some, it seems from v.13a, are involved in sacred rites and in return receive food from the temple. Those actually involved in sacrificial rites appear to have received offerings which were of a sacrificial nature and came from the altar. This will be investigated in the context of 1 Cor.10:14-22, in contrast to that of 1 Cor. 8 where nothing is specifically stated either about sacrificial acts as such or about those who personally participate in those sacrificial acts.

Paul's second cycle of argumentation in 1 Cor. 9 is terminated in verse 15 by the apostle's statement that he has made no use of any of these rights, presumably referring to all those rights mentioned in the previous verses. Paul emphasises his own willingness to set aside his valid rights by using the ἐγὼ in emphatic position at the start of the sentence. Indeed Paul goes even further and begins to explain why he is so ready to relinquish his apostolic rights. Paul would rather die than have anyone falsify his ground for boasting i.e. his boast that he takes no pay for being an apostle. The latter part of 9:15 has a number of textual variants and the structure of the verse is also somewhat disjointed, but Paul goes on to explain just what he is trying to get across to his Corinthian readers. That which gives Paul no basis for boasting whatsoever is his ministry of preaching the Gospel, for he is under an absolute obligation to preach that Gospel (9:16). In the following verse, Paul expands this notion to show that if, hypothetically, he had chosen of his own will to preach the Gospel, then he could have claimed a reward from the church and from God. The reality, however, is that Paul is not a free agent but rather is under, not only an obligation (v.16) but a divine commission (v.17), to preach the Gospel. Thus Paul has no right to a reward. His reward is his ministry of Gospel preaching and although Paul refers once more to his apostolic right ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ - 'in the Gospel' (v.18), he emphasises that in his preaching, his reward is to render the Gospel free of charge - ἀδάπανον θῆσω τὸ εὐαγγέλιον. In addition to his view in 9:18, Paul has already shown in 9:12 that his



preaching without charge was designed so as to put no stumbling-block in the way of the Gospel. Paul's emphasis throughout the whole section is on renouncing rights rather than claiming rights. The apostle sets aside his own advantage, inclinations and desires for the sake of the Gospel and the needs of others. The apostle thereby seeks to prise the Corinthian believers away from their own entrenched and selfish individual interpretations and positions regarding participation in temple meals.

### 6.5.3 CHAPTER 9:19-23

In this section Paul takes his argument a stage further as he underlines the need for flexibility, accommodation, service and humility in the cause of the Gospel. With the issue of 'idol meat' no doubt still very much in the forefront of his mind, Paul challenges the Corinthians yet again to do three things -

1. To be ready to set aside their Christian freedom, already mentioned in 8:9, and to become slaves (9:19).
2. To do this for the sake of the Gospel of Christ (9:12, 15-18).
3. To look beyond their own entrenched cravings to exercise rights/freedoms, based on their many individual positions on 'idol-food', and instead to be concerned for the needs of others, supremely that others might embrace the Gospel without being caused to stumble in any way (9:19).

Paul thus presents himself as a living example of someone willing to be flexible, willing to humble himself and willing to set aside his freedom, even his own identity and position, for the sake of winning converts. He cites four groups of people, along with his response to each group -

1. The Jews 9:20 καὶ ἐγενόμην τοῖς Ἰουδαίοις ὡς Ἰουδαῖος. Paul puts this another way - τοῖς ὑπὸ νόμον ὡς ὑπὸ νόμον, though he stresses that he himself is not under the law.
2. The Gentiles 9:21 τοῖς ἀνόμοις ὡς ἄνομος though Paul points out that he himself is under the law of Christ.
3. The weak 9:22a ἐγενόμην τοῖς ἀσθενέσιν ἀσθενής.
4. Everyone 9:22b τοῖς πᾶσιν γέγονα πάντα.

In each case, Paul's overall stated objective is the same, namely to win converts to the faith and "that I might by all means save some." (9:22b - RSV) The apostle then repeats his fundamental motivation in all this, namely διὰ τὸ εὐαγγέλιον - 'for the sake of the Gospel' and ἵνα συγκοινωνῶς αὐτοῦ γένωμαι - 'in order that I might become a co-partner/sharer of it'. (9:23) i.e. a participant in the benefits of the Gospel.

This section 9:19-23 thus demonstrates Paul's concern for others and his willingness to consider other people's situations, status and position, with the overriding concern that they respond to the Gospel. The Corinthians are being given yet another

object lesson in looking beyond their own position and looking to the needs of others.<sup>51</sup> Paul yet again elevates Gospel and community arguments over and above the narrow, entrenched individual concerns of believers at Corinth. Paul thus continues to deal with the 'idol food' issue through a series of 'general principle arguments' which deliberately shift the focus away from individual knowledge, rights and freedoms.

#### 6.5.4 CHAPTER 9:24-27

Bearing in mind the real possibility that the Isthmian Games<sup>52</sup> formed at least part of the background to 1 Cor.8-10, Paul turns naturally to an athletic illustration in 9:24-27. He reminds the Corinthian believers that although there may be many runners in a race, nevertheless only one actually wins the prize, and the Corinthians should so compete as to attain that prize. (9:24). Every competitor exercises self-control/abstinence in all things in order to win a perishable wreath. How much more self-control/abstinence is required of the believer whose eyes are set on an eternal and imperishable wreath'. (v.25). Yet again Paul is addressing the problem of the assertion of individual viewpoint and freedom by urging the Corinthians to exercise strong, self-control. His call for abstinence - ἐγκρατεύεται - may even be a subtle request for self-control at, or withdrawal from, temple meals. Once again Paul presents himself as an example of one who, in a deliberate way, disciplines his own body and brings it into subjection, lest after exhorting others, Paul himself should fail to reach the standard he has set for others. (v.26-27). Thus yet again, Paul seeks to direct the Corinthians' thoughts away from self and from selfish individualism regarding temple meals. His line of argumentation in 9:24-27 thus centres on keeping self in hand and on striving as an absolute priority for the imperishable prize. It is noteworthy that as Paul sets himself up as a model of self-control and self-denial in 9:27, so he does exactly the same at the close of the other chapters which concern us - 1 Cor. 8:13 and 10:33 - 11:1. Indeed at the close of Chapter 9, Paul in a real sense reiterates the theme which opened the chapter, namely willingness to place limits on Christian and apostolic

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<sup>51</sup> We contend that Paul's directing of the Corinthian's thinking away from individual perspectives and towards communal consciousness, was not only forced upon him by the very nature of the 'idol food' issue itself, but also was conditioned by the aims of his life and ministry, namely that the apostle "understands the development of the community itself to be the goal of Christ's and his own work". (Stanley K. Stowers "Paul on the Use and Abuse of Reason" in D.L. Balch, E. Ferguson and W.A. Meeks Eds. *Greeks, Romans and Christians: Essays in Honor of Abraham J. Malherbe*. Fortress Press. Minneapolis. 1990 p.266). Stowers notes Paul's deep concern for 'the weak', a concept which Stowers identifies as having its origin in the therapeutic models of the Hellenistic philosophies. Stowers supports our own position when he maintains that the weak and weak in conscience were not a 'specific group' but rather people who had a particular disposition which led to conflict and aversion (in 1 Cor. 8) where pagan associates were concerned. (ibid. p.281).

<sup>52</sup> J.M. Gilchrist has noted that 1 Corinthians shows no signs of any previous visit by Paul, other than the original mission. (J.M. Gilchrist "Paul and the Corinthians - the Sequence of Letters and Visits" in *J.S.N.T.* 34, 1988 pp.47-67 esp. p.53). It is possible that the holding of the Isthmian Games in Corinth, together with confusion caused by Paul's 'previous letter' of 1 Cor. 5:9, was sufficient to exacerbate and rekindle the ongoing issue of 'idol meat' during the apostle's physical absence from Corinth.

freedom for the sake of the eternal Gospel of Christ. Whilst Barrett seems to be going too far in his interpretation of 9:24 "You have entered the Christian life through baptism: this does not guarantee your final perseverance" (1968: 217), nevertheless we agree that Paul is saying there is no automatic link between those starting and those finishing a race. The Corinthians must strive and persevere, with self-discipline and self-control, taking nothing at all for granted, and it is this latter theme that Paul now begins to address in the opening section of Chapter 10, to which we now turn our attention.

### 6.5.5 CHAPTER 10:1-13

The location of 10:1-22 at this point in Paul's argument has caused considerable scholarly debate, as we have already noted. N. Walter<sup>53</sup> has pointed out that many scholars have felt that Paul wavered in his opinion on 'idol food' and that he therefore varied his support for his readers, sometimes voting with the weak but sometimes with the strong. Walter doubts this as an explanation of the apparent tension in the text and in any case affirms that "Seit Hans von Sodens klassischer Studie 'Sakrament und Ethik bei Paulus' (1931) ist in der (deutschen) Exegese immer wieder die Zusammengehörigkeit der Kapitel 1. Kor.8-10 behauptet und die Einheitlichkeit ihrer Thematik durchzuführen versucht worden".<sup>54</sup> Walter himself seems to take a somewhat open-ended stand -

Das bisher vorgelegte 'Kaleidoskop der Variationen' in dieser Frage spricht allenfalls gegen die optimistische Meinung, es würde eine allseits befriedigende Lösung gefunden werden können, aber durchaus nicht dagegen, dass die Exegese der betreffenden Abschnitte mit einer Aufteilung des Briefes rechnen muss.<sup>55</sup>

Against those who would see a disjuncture between 9:27 and 10:1, we argue that there is a real, indeed logical, connection between the two. In 9:24, Paul attempted to show a contrast between the 'all' who competed in a running race, on the one hand, and the single individual who won the race, on the other. 10:1-13 is modelled on the same basic principle and as such constitutes a continuation and elaboration of that principle from the field of athletics. In 10:1-13 Paul is arguing again from the 'all' to 'the few'. In other words he begins with the privileges shared by all the people of Israel in 10:1-4 but demonstrates in 10:5 that most of these fathers displeased God and perished i.e. most

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<sup>53</sup> Nikolaus Walter "Christusglaube und Heidnische Religiosität in Paulinischen Gemeinden" in *NTS* 25 (1979) pp.422-442, esp. p.426.

<sup>54</sup> My translation is as follows "Ever since H. von Soden's classic study ... the fact that Chapters 8-10 belong together has been repeatedly asserted in (German) exegesis, and the attempt has been made to pursue their thematic unity."

<sup>55</sup> My translation - "The 'kaleidoscope of variations' hitherto available/published on this question speaks if anything against the optimistic opinion that an all round satisfactory solution can be found but it does not speak at all against the possibility that the exegesis of the passages concerned may have to reckon with a partition of the letter."

failed to win the race and gain the prize. The apostle then specifies the ways in which most of the fathers failed to please God and he applies them as warnings into the Corinthians' present situation.

Using a lengthy series of O.T. analogies, Paul thus moves from the idea of 'all starting a race but only one winning it', into the O.T. experience of the people of Israel in the events of the Exodus and Wilderness Wanderings. In vv.1-4 of Chapter 10, Paul uses the Nominative Masculine Plural word πάντες - 'all' - no less than five times, in what is surely a parallel to his πάντες of 9:24. The experiences common to all of the fathers of Israel were that they 'were under the cloud' (10:1), 'passed through the sea' (v.1), 'were baptised<sup>56</sup> into Moses' (v.2), and that they 'ate the same supernatural food' (v.3) and 'drank the same supernatural drink (v.4).<sup>57</sup> Paul's use of οἱ πατέρες ἡμῶν - 'our fathers' - in 10:1 probably indicates that although most of the Corinthian believers had a Gentile background, Paul nevertheless addressed them all as having an ancestry in the ancient Israelite people of God. Though the details of 10:1-4 have triggered a variety of interpretations, the general thrust appears to be that just as in the New Covenant, believers have the sacraments of water, blood and wine provided by God, so there were equivalents (analogies) in the Old Covenant for the 'baptism' and 'eucharist' of the New Covenant. The crux is surely that *all* of these people of Israel possessed the same privileges but Paul will then show how such privileges in no way guaranteed the security of those people. Though the details may be open to varied interpretation, the overall thrust constitutes a logical development of Chapters 8 and 9. We thus contend that Barrett misses this flow of argument when he asserts that in Ch. 9 Paul interrupts the idol-food issue "by entering on a digression". (1968: 219) At the end of Ch. 9, Barrett feels that "the main subject has not completely disappeared from Paul's mind". (ibid. p.220). We argue, by contrast, that 9:1 - 10:13 is integral and crucial in Paul's dealings with the Corinthians and builds up to his further practical exhortation in 10:14 - 11:1. Another watershed in Paul's argumentation is reached in 10:5, where Paul emphasises that God was not pleased with the majority of these people for they were scattered in the wilderness, cf. Num. 14:16.

In the following section 10:6-13, the apostle builds up a series of warnings to the Corinthian believers on the basis of God's past judgment on the people of Israel. Paul introduces this section with a statement that the experiences of ancient Israel constitute warnings for Corinthian Christians not to desire evil in the ways that Israel of old desired evil. Paul then traces four of those acts of the people of Israel which brought down the judgment of God and he sets them out in 10:7-10. Paul has prepared the way for this section by recalling that *all* the people of Israel had the privileges and *all* of them had access to the benefits of Christ and the Spirit. Most of these people, however, were cast

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<sup>56</sup> There is manuscript variation over this term. Some MSS give the middle form ἐβαπτίσαντο, while others give the passive form ἐβαπτίσθησαν.

<sup>57</sup> The O.T. appearances of these phenomena are in Ex. 13:21, 14:22,29 (10:1); Ex. 16:4,35; Deut. 8:3 (10:3); Ex. 17:6; Num. 20:11 (10:4) (1 Cor. parallel occurrences are in brackets).

off by God because they failed to avail themselves of God's provision, preferring rather the evil things which Paul now proceeds to recall as a warning to the Corinthians and to himself not to incur God's judgment on themselves. Paul's warning is four-fold -

1. v.7 - The Corinthians are exhorted not to become 'idolaters' or 'worshippers of idols'<sup>58</sup> as some of the people of Israel had been - μηδὲ εἰδωλολάτραι γίνεσθε. Even the RSV translation - 'Do not be idolaters' - is somewhat misleading here in its rather ambiguous rendering, for it suggests that the Corinthians - or at least some of them - were already in the category of 'idolater'. Paul is rather warning the believers of what they *could become*<sup>59</sup> and he draws his material here from the incident of the golden calf in Ex. 32: 4-6, where the people of Israel turned to other gods. Interestingly Paul uses the backcloth of eating, drinking and festival activity but this, the first of four warnings, is the only one which fails to state the divine punishment/judgment that followed it. However, in this usage, the apostle fails to define 'idolater' in detail, but seems to imply a blanket condemnation of those who eat, drink and 'dance'. Add to this the fact that εἰδωλολάτρης does not appear in pre-Christian Greek usage and it becomes apparent that the Corinthians did not necessarily hold the same concept and viewpoint as Paul regarding the nature and significance of the term 'idolater'. Interestingly also it is only in this first warning that Paul fails to include himself, preferring to use the second person plural imperative form of γίνομαι. This may reflect Paul's total abhorrence of idolatry such that he could not even imagine his own personal involvement.

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<sup>58</sup> In addition to the occurrence of the term εἰδωλολάτραι in 1 Cor. 10:7, the term appears only six times in the N.T. Two of these occurrences are in 1 Cor. 5:10,11 and have been treated already. In 1 Cor. 6:9 Paul informs the Corinthians that in addition to certain other groups, 'idolaters' will not inherit the kingdom of God. Similarly the writer of Ephesians names the covetous person (Eph. 5:5 - 'that is, an idolater' RSV) as having no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. The remaining two occurrences of εἰδωλολάτρης are in the book of Revelation. In Chapter 21:8 the 'idolaters' appear in a list of those who are condemned to the lake that burns with fire and sulphur. Likewise in 22:15 'idolaters' have a place only outside the city. In every N.T. reference εἰδωλολάτραι are roundly condemned but in no case is a serious attempt made to define or describe such people in any detail whatsoever. No account is taken of the ways in which 'idolaters' perceived themselves or of the viewpoints they may have held regarding their own religious activity. Thus, for example, the possibility that many Corinthian believers faced a *genuine* dilemma concerning sacrificial feasts and that many attended *only* because of social or political pressure/obligation, is excluded by such recent scholarly contributions as that of G.D. Collier "'That We Might Not Crave Evil' The Structure and Argument of 1 Cor.10:1-13" *JSNT* 55 (1994) esp. p.71-4. Collier contends that the passage is a midrashic exposition based on Num.11 and that the Corinthians were "craving evil" and were involved because of a "selfish craving" to eat and drink in temples.

<sup>59</sup> Gordon Fee (*The First Epistle* 1987: 451-462) has tackled the question of whether the four examples in 10:6-13 are four reasons for Israel's failure and as such are general examples of sin, or whether they reflect the actual present situation in first century Corinth. Fee leans strongly towards the latter view (p. 451), particularly in showing the close correlation between pagan feasts and sexual immorality. This appears to be a plausible argument, but we do acknowledge the validity of Hooker's warning, from another context, that "exhortation to avoid a certain course of action certainly does not necessarily indicate that those addressed have already fallen prey to the temptation, as every preacher and congregation must be aware". See M.D. Hooker, "Were There False Teachers in Colossae?" in *Christ and Spirit in the N.T.* Ed. B. Lindars and S.S. Smalley 1973 p.317.

2. v.8 - The Corinthians must not commit fornication - μηδὲ πορνεύωμεν - as some of the ancient people of Israel did. In those days, 23,000 fell in a single day in the plague which followed Israel's fornication with the Moabite women (Num.25:1,9). The Numbers account actually states that 24,000 died. Whatever the reason for the discrepancy, Paul includes himself in this second warning. The context was sacrificial eating.

3. v.9 - Paul's third warning exhorts the Corinthian believers, alongside whom he includes himself, not to put Christ to the test. Other MSS contain the title κύριον or θεόν instead of τὸν Χριστόν. Paul's source for this warning lay in the experience of the people of Israel as they journeyed around the land of Edom (Num.21:4-9). The people spoke against God and Moses concerning the lack of food and water, with the result that God sent serpents to bite and kill many of those people. Once again Paul chooses a situation involving food and drink as a basis for his challenge to the Corinthians. The Israelites had stubbornly refused to wait and to trust God to provide all they needed on their travels. We cannot be sure what the particular tendency of the Corinthians may have been but Paul may well have viewed their participation in temple meals as a case of testing the Lord to see how far his patience would stretch.

4. v.10 - The final warning aimed against grumbling precludes dogmatism regarding whether or not Paul included himself. Some MSS use the second person plural present imperative γογγύζετε, but others contain a first person plural subjunctive form, γογγύζωμεν. Those who murmured/grumbled had been destroyed by the Destroyer and the sequence of events can be traced in Num.14:2 (murmuring of all the people against Moses and Aaron); 14:36 (the spies' report causes the congregation to murmur); 16:41 (the people murmur against Moses and Aaron); 16:49 (the resulting death by plague of 14700 people); 17:5 (God's plan to bring an end to the people's murmurings against Moses); 17:10 (a further warning sign against murmuring). A context of food and drink is not specifically mentioned here, though we know that murmuring certainly and not infrequently arose in that sort of context. Paul has now completed his four warnings, each rooted in the bitter experiences of ancient Israel, and he is now ready to underline their significance.

The apostle explains in 10:11 that just as these things, or variant MSS 'all these things', happened to those people of Israel τυπικῶς 'as a warning' (RSV), so they were written down πρὸς νοουθεσίαν ἡμῶν 'for our instruction' (RSV), 'upon whom the end of the ages has come'. (RSV). The RSV translation 'warning' seems strange since τυπικῶς is normally rendered 'figuratively', 'as example' or 'typically'. After all, the punishments listed by Paul in 10:7-10 actually happened to the people of Israel in ancient history. The warnings therefore, as already stated by Paul in 10:6, were for the benefit of the Corinthians in the mid first century C.E., and the term νοουθεσίαν ἡμῶν in 10:11 would thus seem more appropriately rendered, 'our warning, admonition' rather than 'our instruction' as in RSV. After all, for the Israelites of old, it was now too late to heed

warnings. Paul thus concentrates his strong warnings onto the Corinthians who he sees now as being in real danger.

That danger will be spelt out by the apostle in an intensification and acceleration of direct and blunt language. His line of argumentation is summarized in the terse and uncompromising form of the seven Greek words of verse 12. The ὥστε - 'therefore' or 'consequently' - of v.12 makes a clear link with Paul's lengthy, preceding arguments. The message is simple - let he who imagines he has stood (perfect infinitive ἑστῶναι) watch out/be careful lest he should fall. Paul uses here the perfect tense with present sense - "has stood up" in the sense of "is now standing". The message is also clear in that it incorporates two thoughts -

1. Some Corinthians had indeed developed a false sense of security - perhaps based on an automatic and guaranteed view of sacramental efficacy - through which they had deceived themselves into imagining that all was well, and was bound to remain so, in their standing and relationship to God.
2. Those Corinthians were in imminent danger of falling and although Paul fails to spell out at this stage the exact nature of 'falling', nevertheless he treats it as both a real possibility for those Corinthians and also therefore as something to be avoided at all costs. Once again, moreover, a clear link exists between Chapters 9 and 10. Paul has already admitted the real possibility of his own falling (9:27). Now he warns the Corinthians that they too could fall (10:12).

Finally Paul assures the Corinthian believers that no trial or temptation has yet seized upon them except that of a human kind (ἀνθρώπινος). That is stage 1 of Paul's argument that the Corinthians' trials have not been extraordinary or 'out of this world'. Paul quickly piles in three more arguments to bolster his case -

1. God is faithful.
2. God will not allow the Corinthians to be tested/tempted, (πειρασθῆναι aorist infinitive passive, suggesting trials in particular and specific situations) over or beyond that which they are able (to bear).
3. God, along with the temptation, will also make a way out - τὴν ἑκβάσιν - or means of clearance.

The result is that the Corinthians will be able/have the power to endure/bear it - τοῦ δύνασθαι ὑπενεγκεῖν. Paul is basically saying that no 'trial situation' faced by the Corinthians either past, present or future, is beyond God's power to help. On the one hand Paul is offering the believers great comfort, but on the other hand he presents a huge challenge because fundamentally he is leaving the Corinthians without excuse. God's sufficient power is available to the Corinthians in all situations of temptation, such as for example involvement in pagan temple meals, but Paul's point is that the believers should not put themselves into positions where they face such severe, but avoidable, temptation. The thread of Paul's argument is about to reach its climax in 10:14 - 22. Having assured the Corinthians of the sufficiency of God in 10:13, Paul will now seek to set practical

limits regarding 'idol-food' and to show his readers that they cannot abuse either God's power or their freedom as Christians. These limitations are worked out by Paul in 10:14 - 11:1. As we enter this section of Paul's practical exhortations, it is worth a reminder that in all of this, Paul was reacting to a crisis in the church and his 'theology' thus was worked out in a letter in this particular context - "Not that Paul did not have a theology, or a 'doctrine', but just how it was organised is difficult to tell, because he himself did not know before he committed it to writing... He had to make it clear to himself and to them what the theological implications of the gospel were and to adjust these implications so as to respond to the Corinthian crisis."<sup>60</sup>

## 6.6 CHAPTER 10:14 - 22

### 6.6.1 INTRODUCTION

We have seen that in 1 Cor. 9 Paul worked through a series of arguments which sought to shift the focus from individual rights/freedoms to that which benefitted the community and the furtherance of the Gospel. In 1 Cor.10:1-13 Paul employed a series of O.T. arguments rooted in the experiences of the ancient people of Israel and designed to warn the Corinthians about the very real danger that they too could fall. The basic function of the section 9:1 - 10:13 was not only to illustrate and consolidate Paul's exhortations of 8:1-13, but also to prepare the Corinthians for the further practical instruction which Paul presents in 10:14 - 11:1. That instruction falls broadly into two sections -

1. 10:14-22 The temple context which picks up again Paul's views already expressed in 8:1-13.
2. 10:23-30 The market and dinner contexts. Final exhortations are then made in the concluding section 10:31 - 11:1.

We maintain that the temple context of 10:14-22 is related to, and builds upon, the argument already presented by Paul in Chapter 8. These latter arguments along with his reasoning in Chapter 9 and his warnings in 10:1-13, all constitute a preparation for the climax of the apostle's case which is reached in 10:14-22. Paul's line of thought in 10:1-13 was three-fold:

1. All of Israel had access to the sacraments and to the power of God in their wilderness wanderings (10:1-4), yet the majority of them fell by the wayside. (10:5).

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<sup>60</sup> Niels Hyldahl "The Corinthian 'Parties' and the Corinthian Crisis" in *Studia Theologica* No. 45 (1991) pp.19-32 esp. p.24. Helpful in this respect is Becker's consideration of Paul's letters from the perspective of the interaction between coherence and contingency. Thus Beker argues - and the relevance of this is not hard to see for 1 Cor.8-10 - that "Paul's hermeneutical skill exhibits a creative freedom that allows the Gospel tradition to become living speech within the exigencies of the daily life of his churches." See J.C. Beker *Paul the Apostle* 1980 p.33.



2. Israel actually did enter various forbidden areas of behaviour and suffered the consequences from God's hand. (10:6-11). As Israel fell, so the Corinthians were not exempt from the real danger of falling. (10:12).
3. No Corinthian believers could ever claim that the situations into which they might enter, for example a temple meal context, were so difficult that God could not help, sustain or deliver them. (10:13). Thus the believers were without excuse should they deliberately involve themselves in temple meals on the pretence that the pressures of that temptation were intolerable or insurmountable and hence outside of God's power to intervene and help.

Based on this three-pronged argument, Paul opens his crucial section 10:14-22 with the strong conjunction *διόπερ* meaning 'on this very account', 'for this very reason' or 'wherefore'. Paul had previously used this strong, argumentative conjunction at the other key stage of his reasoning, namely in 8:13. That which Paul is now going to state so bluntly, hangs on all his previous, preparatory argumentation. Paul thus reaches the climax or watershed of his reasoning in 10:14 but the bluntness of his bold imperative is tempered by his deep concern for his Corinthian believers - *ἀγαπητοί μου* - 'my beloved'. The second person plural present imperative *φεύγετε* suggests a continuing and consistent action required of the Corinthians but RSV offers the rather weak rendering 'shun'. The translation offered by H.K. Moulton (Ed.)<sup>61</sup> is 'flee', 'take to flight' or in the context of 10:14 'shrink', 'stand fearfully aloof'. The object of the verb *φεύγετε* is 'idolatry' but although this appears to be a simple enough command, we must consider more closely the Greek phrase *φεύγετε ἀπὸ τῆς εἰδωλολατρίας*. The latter term, translated by English versions as 'idolatry' or 'worship of idols', makes its one and only appearance in 1 Cor. at 10:14. Indeed the word occurs only three other times in the N.T. In Galatians 5:20 Paul includes 'idolatry' in a list of the works of the flesh and warns his readers "That those who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God". (RSV) The writer of Colossians 3:5 lists various characteristics which incur the wrath of God and which are therefore to be put to death as earthly, namely "fornication, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry". (RSV) Finally, in 1 Peter 4:3, the writer implores his readers to live no longer by human passions but by the will of God. His readers had once lived as the Gentiles lived - "in licentiousness, passions, drunkenness, revels, carousing, and lawless idolatry." (RSV) This way of life is now a thing of the past for believers in Christ. 'Idolatry' is thus roundly condemned in its every occurrence in the N.T., but the fact remains that the defining of 'idolatry' in practice, and the delimitation<sup>62</sup> of its

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<sup>61</sup> H.K.Moulton Ed. *Analytical Greek Lexicon Revised* Grand Rapids, Zondervan Pub. House 1978 p.424. BAG suggests 'flee from', 'avoid' or 'shun' with acc. of the thing and used in a moral sense. This of course once more begs the question of just what constituted 'idolatry' in actual practical terms.

<sup>62</sup> The complex issue of delimiting boundaries is illustrated by Barrett's comment on 10:14 that Christians should flee idolatry in the sense of avoiding occasions like feasts in heathen temples "if these had a markedly religious content" (*First Epistle* 1968: 230). In an ancient feast, however, the 'religious' content was *always* in some sense represented. The 'religious' could never be totally excluded.

boundaries, is not attempted by the N.T. writers. The scope for confusion, and the emergence of a wide range of individual viewpoints, was thus enormous. We have argued that this is precisely what happened in the Corinthian Church.

Having boldly named the word τῆς εἰδωλολατρίας in 10:14 and having already warned the Corinthians not to become εἰδωλολάτραι in 10:7, Paul now continues his line of reasoning in 10:15-22. In order to build up a picture of Paul's viewpoint on 'idolatry', we note the only remaining word in 10:14 with which we have not yet dealt, namely the preposition ἀπό, for herein, we contend, lies a significant issue. Paul's choice of ἀπό, rather than ἐκ, suggests that he is warning the believers to 'shrink away from' or 'stand fearfully aloof away from' 'idolatry'. In other words, 'idolatry' is something from which Paul is not calling them out, but rather is telling them to flee 'away from'. The Corinthians were not yet involved in 'idolatry'. At this point, 'idolatry' was something outside of the Corinthians' experience. Moreover, Paul did not mention specific terms for 'idolatry' or even 'sacrifice' in 1 Cor. 8. Thus in 1 Cor.10, at least up to verse 14, although 'idolatry' remained a serious temptation to the Corinthians, nevertheless they still apparently remained outside the boundaries of 'idolatry' itself. This raises three crucial issues for our consideration of 10:14 -22.

1. How did Paul, on the one hand, and the Corinthians on the other, actually define εἰδωλολατρία?
2. Was there a fundamental or relative difference between the 'eating at table' of 1 Cor.8 and the 'idolatry' of 1 Cor.10? In other words, what did Corinthian believers have to do before their actions were classed as 'idolatry'?
3. Was there a basic difference between the context of 1 Cor.8 and that of 1 Cor.10: 14-22 which might help to account for the supposed contradiction between Paul's teaching in those respective two sections - a contradiction which has baffled scholars and commentators for many years?

These are the questions to which answers will be sought as we consider 10:14 - 22 against its background. Before Paul reaches the climax of his argument, however, he has several more points to make to his Corinthian readers. In 10:15 Paul declares that he speaks as to φρονίμοις - 'wise or thoughtful people'. RSV renders it 'sensible men'. The apostle invites the Corinthians - emphatic nominative plural ὑμεῖς - to judge - aorist imperative κρίνατε - that which he says. We have already seen with reference to 1 Cor.8:1 that many in Corinth were claiming to have 'knowledge' about what was involved in the whole 'idol-food' issue. Perhaps there is a touch of irony here as Paul appeals to the wisdom/common sense of the Corinthians. Perhaps Paul is seeking to get the believers to see for themselves the issue as Paul would like them to see it, in which case the apostle may be trying to temper the blunt imperative he has just used in 10:14. The aorist tense of the imperative seems to show that Paul is calling them here and now to consider and accept his forthcoming line of reasoning. Paul may be trying to keep his readers with him by acknowledging that they do, of course, have knowledge/wisdom in these things. After

all, Paul does not want to alienate the believers before he has presented his even stronger arguments in 10:20-22. Although therefore Paul utters a clear command in 10:14, he then follows it up with a series of reasoned arguments, the wisdom of which he hopes his readers will see, understand and accept for themselves.

In the course of the section 10:16-20 one Greek word, or cognates of it, appears no less than four times, and we maintain that it is this concept of *κοινωνία* which provides the lynch-pin for our understanding of Paul's thinking here. This term has been variously translated as 'fellowship', 'partnership', 'participation' or 'communion'. Whichever of these renderings is chosen, the common feature of all four words is that they involve a concept of the communal or the community or relationship. In other words Paul's emphasis once again is away from the individual and towards the idea of the communal. Paul knew or had come to realise or had been informed by the Corinthians that a wide range of valid and genuinely held individual positions existed on the question of the nature and perceived significance of images, sacrifices and communal meals. Yet again, therefore, we find the apostle developing communal arguments rather than individual ones, for he knew that the latter were doomed as possible solutions to the problem of idol-food. Paul's introduction of the measuring-stick of *κοινωνία* in the next stage of his argument need come, therefore, as no surprise, for it is precisely the centrality of this anti-individualist strategy of Paul's for which we have argued throughout our investigation of the 'idol food' issue.

Paul expands and elucidates his theme of *κοινωνία* by the use of two illustrations<sup>63</sup> before he brings his argument to a crunching climax of commands in 10:20-22.

### 6.6.2 A PARALLEL IN THE CHRISTIAN EUCHARIST 10:16-17

Two questions are posed by Paul in v.16, both of which employ the term *οὐχί*, the adverb which can be used in negative interrogations from which the poser of the question expects an answer which affirms and agrees with his own intention. Thus - "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not *koinonia* in/of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not *koinonia* in/of the body of Christ?" The point which Paul seems to be making is that when believers thank God for the cup and break the bread of the Eucharist, a relationship is set up in which they participate or share in the blood and body of Christ himself. Christ and believers are thus related and the believers share in Christ through their participation in this appointed sacrament. Both of the verbs *εὐλογοῦμεν* and *κλῶμεν* are in the first person plural form, indicating that the Church, not just an individual, participates in Christ when it blesses the cup and breaks the bread. The key

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<sup>63</sup> Philip Sigal represents a wide range of scholars when he claims, regarding the first of these illustrations - "It should be considered that at 1 Co.10:16-17, Paul is definitely referring to the Eucharist..." ("Another Note to 1 Cor.10:16" in *N.T.S.* 29 (1983) p.135).

twin emphases of Paul's argument thus are 'community' and 'relationship', through 'participation'. Both emphases are precisely in line with the various anti-individualist approaches which Paul has consistently employed since 1 Cor.8:1. Paul basically is showing how Christians participate together in the benefits of the death of Christ. The Passover meal is given new significance by Paul. Believers are in union with others and with Christ, as they share in the cup and bread. The Corinthian believers are united with Christ and as Paul has underlined repeatedly, whether the Corinthians like it or not, they are in union with, and in relationship with, their fellow believing brethren within that Body of Christ which is the Church. Thus Paul develops and deepens this argument in 10:17.

Verse 17 in a literal translation would read "because one bread, we the many are in a body, for we all share in/partake out of the one bread". The RSV expresses it - "Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread". The verse is a vivid contrast between plurality and singularity. Paul emphasises that the believers may be a plurality - οἱ πολλοὶ ἔσμεν; οἱ ... πάντες... μετέχομεν - yet they are also ἓν σῶμα - 'one body' - and partake ἐκ τοῦ ἑνὸς ἄρτου - 'from the one bread'. The reason why the many are in fact one is because there is one bread and the many all partake of that one bread. In other words all who partake of the one bread are united to one another because they are united to Christ. Even the term μετέχειν is virtually interchangeable with κοινωνεῖν. Verse 17 thus reinforces and compounds the argument Paul presented in v.16. Membership of Christ bonds and cements the plurality of believers into a single body, which is the Body of Christ. This has enormous consequences for the lives of the Corinthian believers. The Lord's Supper provided no automatic guarantee against a fall or against divine punishment, and Barrett (1968: 234) maintains that

It [The Lord's Supper] is not to be taken (as it seems many of the Corinthians did take it) as an *opus operatum* behind which they could shelter, while consulting their own convenience in regard to pagan sacrifices and idolatrous practices in general.

Most of all, however, Paul is indicating that the Lord's Supper recalls what has already happened, namely that the believers have been brought into union with Christ. This is a coherent and unbreakable union in which 'bread', 'body', 'Christ' and 'church' are inseparably identified together. In a real sense the four have become one and cannot ever be separated. The implication is that believers must never forge any other union or partake of any activity which would damage their unique and exclusive relationship to Christ, the head of the Body of which they have been made members. Involvement in the Lord's meal thus precludes any meal that might involve participation in idolatry. Paul will now develop this thought in the following verses.

### 6.6.3 A PARALLEL IN THE SACRIFICES OF ANCIENT ISRAEL 10:18

The Corinthian believers are now called by Paul to look at the case of τὸν Ἰσραὴλ κατὰ σάρκα - literally 'Israel according to the flesh'. The context is thus the religious history of Israel and the apostle draws out a specific feature of that religious belief and practice. Once again Paul asks a question which in reality is a statement of his own observations and which lends itself to his own line of reasoning with the Corinthians. In this section, the apostle is neither giving instruction on the Lord's Supper nor offering a lesson on Israel's religious history, but rather is conducting a theological argument which will reach its climax in 10:19-22. Paul asks the question οὐχ οἱ ἐσθίοντες τὰς θυσίας κοινωνοὶ τοῦ θυσιαστηρίου εἰσίν; "are not those who eat the sacrifices partners/sharers of the altar?" Once again the concept of partnership or sharing is involved but in 10:18 we can observe three specific points which constitute developments of Paul's argument -

1. Paul's argument has now become more specific regarding the act of eating. In 10:1-5 he had written about 'all' of the fathers of Israel and how most of them had displeased God; in 10:6-15 Paul warns the Corinthians by using a mixture of first and second person plural pronouns, apparently addressing himself to all of the Corinthians; in 10:16-17, the 'we' form of address is also employed. In 10:18, however, Paul appears to refer specifically to a group of people, namely οἱ ἐσθίοντες τὰς θυσίας - 'those who eat the sacrifices'. The use of present participle suggests an ongoing action on the part of those who eat. The implication seems to be that not all of Israel ate the sacrifices but only specific people did so. We know, for example, from Leviticus 10:12-15 that the priests had the privilege of consuming parts of certain sacrifices. Moses commanded the priests to take the cereal offering that remained of the offerings by fire to the Lord and to eat it in a holy place since this was their due. Likewise the priests had the right to eat the waved breast and thigh offering in any clean place, those parts being their due from the sacrifices of the peace offerings of the people of Israel. Thus, as in 1 Cor.9:13, Paul is dealing here with specifically appointed people involved in temple service.
2. The second key item to be noted in 10:18 is Paul's first specific use of the term θυσία. That which was consumed by these specific people was also something specific, namely the sacrifices, with which term Paul uses the definite article. The food consumed by the priests was thus not ordinary food, nor even that which in some vague or indirect way had been involved in the sacrificial process, but rather was actually τὰς θυσίας - 'the sacrifices'. H.K. Moulton (Ed.) (1978: 198) describes the term in 1 Cor.10:18 as meaning "the flesh of victims eaten by the sacrificers." We note also a fact of which the significance will shortly become apparent, namely that Paul did not use the term θυσία in 1 Cor.8.
3. Those who eat these sacrifices are said by Paul to be κοινωνοὶ τοῦ θυσιαστηρίου - 'partners in/of the altar'. His point is that the sacrifices made at the altar carry

benefits and that those who make and eat those sacrifices benefit together through participation in the altar. Paul's emphasis is thus very much on those involved in the actual act of making and eating sacrifices. Fee (1987: 470) disagrees, however, and claims that "the language 'eat the sacrifices' refers to the meal that followed the actual sacrifice, in which they together ate portions of the sacrificed food". Bruce holds the view that 10:18 refers to the practices still current in the mid-first century C.E. Jerusalem Temple. He contends that those who ate the sacrificial flesh were especially the priests and Levites (1971: 95), quoting Lev. 10:12ff, Num.18:8ff, and Deut.18:1ff. Bruce then adds that the eating of sacrificial flesh was also practised by the 'lay worshippers' (1971: 95), as evidenced in Lev.7:11ff, Deut.12:5ff, and 1 Sam. 1:4, 9:19ff, 16:2ff. The idea that specific people were involved is strengthened, however, by a passage in Philo<sup>64</sup> which indicates that the food offered no longer belongs to the person making the sacrifice but rather to God who was the intended object of the sacrificial act. The Philo passage continues by describing God as "the benefactor, the bountiful... has made the convivial company of those who carry out the sacrifices partners (κοινωνῶν) of the altar (τοῦ βωμοῦ) whose board they share". The intention of that text thus appears to be that those participants shared/partook together in the food which had been sacrificed on the altar. Whether Paul intended more than this - for example that these people entered a 'relationship' of some sort with the altar or with that represented by the altar - is not stated explicitly. What certainly is clear is that this eating of sacrifices underlined the joint, communal involvement of people in the worship of Yahweh.<sup>65</sup> Having therefore used the analogies of the Eucharist and of Israel's sacrifices, both of which involve food, Paul is now ready to turn to pagan meals as he climbs to the watershed of his argument in 10:19-22.

#### 6.6.4 SACRIFICIAL OFFERINGS BY PAGANS 10:19-22

Having asked two questions in 10:16 and one in 10:18 which anticipated the answer 'Yes', Paul now puts forward two very brief questions in 10:19, both requiring the answer 'No'. Prior to his double question, however, Paul prepares the way by his opening rhetorical question τί οὖν φημι; 'what then am I saying?' These three words have been variously rendered by Bible translations 'Do I mean then, that ...?' (NIV, with the inserted answer 'No' at the start of v.20); 'What say I then...?' (RV); and the somewhat unusual and vague RSV translation - 'What do I imply then ...?' Paul thus has reached the point at which he will shift his argument from the analogies of the historical experiences of the

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<sup>64</sup> See Philo *The Special Laws* 1.221 Tr. F.H. Colson. LCL 1937.

<sup>65</sup> There is no evidence in Judaism that sacrificial offerings were ever felt to contain divinity or that there existed any concept of sacramental communion via consumption of such offerings. In particular G.V. Jourdan "Κοινωνία in 1 Corinthians 10:16" *JBL* Vol. 67 (1948) pp.111-124 is convinced that the 'altar' in 10:18 cannot possibly be a metonym for 'God' (p.122) and that Jews never imagined they could be partners (κοινωνοί) of God. (p.123).

people of Israel, the Christian Eucharist and the sacrifices of Israel to the reality of the temptation facing the Corinthians at temple feasts. The apostle is now ready to present the climax and culmination of his argument, as he spells out for the church what he is actually trying to get across to them regarding their involvement in the 'idol-food' issue. In 10:16-17 Paul has established the principle of communal participation or sharing - the cup is a sharing in the blood of Christ and the broken bread is a sharing in the body of Christ. He then shows in 10:18 how those who eat sacrifices in Israel's sacrificial system are communal sharers or participants in the altar, receiving benefits from the sacrifice they have offered. The emphasis is thus on those who actually offer sacrifices at the altar. Following this, Paul states his position in 10:19 regarding both εἰδωλόθυτον - "food/meat/things offered to 'idols'" - and εἰδωλόν - "an idol", namely that they are both nothing. This of course is in broad agreement with his statements in 1 Cor.8 with respect to 'idols' (v.4) and 'food' (v.8) in their basic nothingness and neutrality.<sup>66</sup> All of this, however, raises a basic question - since Paul is warning the Corinthians of the danger of becoming enslaved in idolatry (1 Cor.10:7,14). and since Paul is apparently unconcerned about εἰδωλόθυτα and εἰδωλα (10:19), then that which constitutes idolatry must be something more - something about which he has not yet specifically written.<sup>67</sup> What is it that, in Paul's eyes, would cause the Corinthian believers unmistakably and undeniably to cross the bridge which opened out into that field called 'idolatry'? The apostle is now ready to challenge the church at Corinth with his own answer to that question.

The Greek text of 10:20 requires careful analysis and exegesis for it represents a crucial stage in Paul's argumentation, not merely within Chapter 10 itself, but in the context of the whole of 1 Cor.8-10. Having relegated εἰδωλόθυτα and εἰδωλα to the category of non-significance, Paul now identifies the issue which really does concern him at the most profound level - ἄλλ' ὅτι ἅ θύουσιν, δαιμονίοις καὶ οὐ θεῶ

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<sup>66</sup> Paul has already argued in 8:4-6 that an 'idol' has no reality in the sense that it does not represent what might truly be considered as a 'god'. However, some Corinthians have not realized that the recognition that an 'idol' is not a god does not therefore mean that it does not represent some form of supernatural power. Paul will argue the very opposite of their viewpoint in 10:20. This certainly helps to remove the supposed conflict between Paul's view in 8:1-13, as compared to his line in 10:14-22. In a real sense, of course, 10:20 essentially is Paul's answer to the dilemma posed to God by Moses in the rabbinic evidence - Exod. Rabbah, 43,6- quoted previously in Section 4.5.

<sup>67</sup> B. Fisk is one scholar who concurs with our thinking at this point - Bruce N. Fisk "Eating Meat offered to Idols: Corinthian Behaviour and Pauline Response in 1 Corinthians 8-10" in *Trinity Journal* 10 NS (1989) 40-70. In this response to Gordon Fee, Fisk notes that 1 Cor.10:19 represents neither εἰδωλόθυτα nor εἰδωλα as possessing any inherent significance. The real problems, says Fisk, are suggested in 10:20, namely "the ritual employing the idol meat and the demons behind the idol." p.58. Thus as we ourselves are arguing, "eating εἰδωλόθυτα is not always idolatry." (ibid.) The point at which we part company with Fisk, however, is in his claim that "chap.8 implies that some Christians can eat idol meat with no transgression." (p.59) Fisk argues that Paul tolerates this activity in 1 Cor.8. Whilst we agree with Fisk that "it does not appear that reclining in an idol's temple is synonymous with idolatry" (p.60) and whilst we agree that eating in 1 Cor.8 is not blatant idolatry, nevertheless we believe that Fisk underestimates the seriousness of 1 Cor.8:11-13 and we cannot therefore agree that Paul is simply tolerant in Ch.8.

[θύουσιν] (v.20a) - "but that the things which they sacrifice, (they sacrifice) to demons and not to a god/God." Although there are four textual variations of 10:20a, footnoted in the UBS 3rd Edition (corrected) of the *Greek New Testament*, there is no effect on the basic sense of the text which is that the sacrifices made by Gentiles are not to a god but rather to demons. This assertion by Paul requires more detailed consideration, and especially because it is followed by its crucial but controversial counterpart - οὐ θέλω δὲ ὑμᾶς κοινωνοὺς τῶν δαιμονίων γίνεσθαι - "and I do not want you to become partners/sharers of the demons". The RSV renders the verse "No, I imply that what pagans sacrifice they offer to demons and not to God. I do not want you to be partners with demons." Other versions indicate a measure of variation in their translation - the NRSV in v.20a replaces 'they offer' (RSV) with 'they sacrifice'. RV rendering is "But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have communion with devils." The NIV offers another variation - "No, but the sacrifices of pagans are offered to demons, not to God, and I do not want you to be participants with demons."

Such is the centrality of this verse for Paul's argument with the Corinthian believers that we shall seek to grapple with it from three perspectives -

1. The findings of our Greco-Roman background research.
2. Paul's viewpoint in 10:20 and its significance for our understanding of 1 Cor.8-10.
3. The contribution of 10:21-22 to the argument.

#### 6.6.4.1 GRECO-ROMAN CONTEXT

We have already observed that out of the large amount of material contained within 1 Cor.8-10, remarkably little is devoted to the actual practical, down-to-earth ground level mechanics of the temple meals issue. Paul's description of the actual and visible 'idol-food' issue is absolutely minimal in 1 Cor.8:1-10:22. Add to that, the fact that 1 Cor.5:9-13 indicates a previous misunderstanding of Paul's intentions regarding idolatry, and it quickly becomes apparent that a large gulf probably existed between Paul's own thinking on the one hand and the perspectives of his Corinthian readers on the other. The crux of Paul's position on temple meals is located in 10:19-22 and we shall need at this stage briefly to summarise the backgrounds against which Paul crystallized his position on Christian involvement. We have seen that the terms *eidolon* and *eidolothuton* could easily be problematical. *Eidolon*, in its various N.T. occurrences, is never clearly defined or described by its users and this immediately opened up the way for a range of viewpoints concerning the nature, boundaries and perceived significance of such terms as 'idol', 'idol food', 'idolater' and 'idolatry'. This, we contend, was one of the root causes of the conflict of opinion in the Corinthian situation, over the whole question of 'idol-food'. The term *eidolon* was used only extremely rarely by Greeks with respect to cult-receiving images of divinities. Its use in Greek circles was in such contexts as human representations, reflection, unreality, ghosts, phantoms and the world of the dead. There



was also an ambiguity of terminology since there was no one-to-one automatic or guaranteed correspondence between a particular term for 'image' and its actual appearance on the ground, let alone regarding the issue of whether or not the image was perceived as a cult-receiving one. Clearly also there was a dilemma for Greeks in their various perceptions of the Roman emperor, an ambiguous figure if ever there was one. On top of that we have seen scope for ambiguity at ground level itself - portraits of the dead were to be found amidst images of emperors and gods; some imperial statues bore attributes of gods; emperor portraits were not necessarily objects of worship; images of emperors could be found side by side with those of traditional gods. Imperial statues could be called *theoi*. In addition to this ambiguity, it needs to be considered that there was little stress in Greek religion on fine distinctions between reality and representation. That which overrode everything else in importance was the execution of ritual acts. In view of this range of variables and ambiguities, it is not too surprising that the perceived functions of the Greek image spanned a wide spectrum - containing or involving divinity, acting as a fetish in magic, an aid to devotion or a work of art. Nor was there by any means a single function attributable to imperial images. Rather they were variously conceived as places of refuge, media for divine portents, as political in function, possessors of supernatural power, signifiers of divine honours, representations of humanity, ornamental objects or merely of no abiding significance. A wide range of viewpoints on the nature and significance of *eidola* clearly existed in the minds of Greco-Roman ancients. Nor was the term *eidolothuton* free from its own problems. It was used as rarely in secular Greek as *eidolon* was used in the sense of a cult-receiving image of divinity. The term *eidolothuton* occurs only 10 times in pre-200 C.E. and non-biblical material, and as in the case of *eidolon*, its polemical usage by Paul opens up the way for the existence of a gulf between Jewish/Christian viewpoints on the one hand and actual Corinthian perspectives on the other.

Being thus aware of the conflicting, but individually valid, Corinthian viewpoints on *eidola*, *eidolothuta*, and therefore inevitably on *eidololatria* itself, Paul has had no alternative but to employ a range of general, but community-oriented, arguments and to prepare the ground for the climax of 10:19-22. In 10:19 Paul summarises and reaffirms the positions which he has already spelt out in Ch.8 by asking the rhetorical question "What am I saying then?", and by posing two questions which clearly expect the answer 'No', namely ὅτι εἰδωλόθυτόν τί ἐστίν; (cf.8:8 "Food will not commend us to God. We are no worse off if we do not eat, and no better off if we do" - RSV) and ὅτι εἰδωλόν τί ἐστίν; (cf. 8:4 "Hence as to the eating of food offered to idols, we know that 'an idol has no real existence and that 'there is no God but one'-" RSV.) 10:19 is thus the point at which Paul reiterates his basic agreement with the position taken by certain Corinthians concerning the fundamental neutrality of food *per se* and the unreality of *eidola*. It is at precisely this point, however, that Paul leaves behind the *eidol.* - based terms which have peppered his reasoning thus far, and moves on to tackle the issue which

stands on the watershed and pinnacle of his concern for the Corinthian believers. Further Greco-Roman background research will be summarized briefly, however, before Paul's intention takes on a sharper focus, for his statement in 10:20 opens up a number of key issues which require elucidation from our background research results. The areas which invite consideration in 10:20 are four-fold:

- A) The nature of the act of sacrifice - ἅ θύουσιν.
- B) The recipients of the sacrificial offerings - δαίμονιους καὶ οὐ θεῶν.
- C) The nature of the δαίμονια.
- D) The nature and significance of the partner/sharer status - κοινωνοὺς τῶν δαίμονιων.

#### 6.6.4.1.1 The Nature of Sacrifice

The act of making a sacrificial offering has been considered in Chapter 5 but a brief summary will be presented here in the specific context of our exegesis of this crucial verse 10:20 -

##### The Problem of Terminology

Scholars traditionally have made a distinction between the *thusia* - day-time Olympian sacrifices - to the traditional gods, and *enagisma* - night-time sacrifices - to the underworld of the dead and of chthonian gods. In practice, however, there was overlap and inconsistency. On top of that we have no central written texts to help us and no complete account of any one imperial sacrifice. Yerkes contends that by the Christian era *thusia* was used to denote any religious rite in which an animal was slaughtered and Meuli claims that during the Hellenistic era, offerings to the dead were carried out according to Olympian rites. Indeed there was a fundamental ambiguity regarding terminology, for Peirce claims that the semantic field of *thusia* covered not only the offering of an animal to the gods but also the slaughtering of an animal for food. Thus we have an immediate overlap between sacrifice and eating. In Homeric and Classical Greek, *hierion* can mean both the victim of a religious offering and the victim of slaughter for a meal. *Thusia* could therefore be used not only in the context of actual sacrificial ritual but also in the context of a meal. In the context of actual rites, there is a scholarly consensus of opinion that in practice, there was little discernible difference between rites offered to heroes and those offered to chthonian gods.

##### The Practicalities of Sacrifice at Ground Level

The overwhelming evidence concerning acts of sacrifice indicates that certain appointed people were involved in the actual act of sacrifice. In the cult of Asclepius for example offerings were normally made by the priests, assisted by the sacristan, and we know from Paus.I.5.1 that at the *tholos* in Athens, it was the Presidents who had to offer the sacrifices. At the Isis cult, recorded in Paus. 10.32.16, only those appointed by Isis could offer sacrifices. Likewise in the Imperial sacrificial system, the Narbo material showed that six specific people sacrificed a victim each, thus leaving open the question of

whether or not all the other consumed food was considered likewise sacrificial. At Gytheum, the councillors and magistrates sacrificed and the ephors offered a bull. At Forum Clodii, one calf was offered annually, but again unspecified was the nature of the remaining food for consumption by those attending. Indeed, although many attended the latter festival, it appears that a separate group ate near the altar. Finally Dionysius Halicarnassus tells us that in general terms, sacrifices were carried out by consuls and priests, the latter burning the first-offering. The act of sacrifice thus lay in the hands of specifically appointed officials, even though many people may have eaten at the feast. The existence of a group of participants with either a specialist standing or a specialist function is attested throughout ancient history. We dealt previously with a Cos inscription of the 3rd Century B.C.E. in which it was stated that after the god's portion had been burnt and after the priest plus others had received their allotted shares, then the remaining meat was to be consumed within the temple precincts. Six centuries later in the early 3rd Century C.E., a Sarapis inscription (P. Mich. Inv. 4686) indicated special portions being allocated to the *agoranomos* - public, Roman official. Clearly not everyone who attended a temple feast nor everyone who ate a meal actually lent a hand in the act of sacrifice.

### **The Perceptions of Sacrifice & Sacrificial Food**

A number of factors have been noted which create ambiguity regarding whether or not the food eaten at festivals was considered to be actually sacrificial. At Demeter it was observed that there existed a separation between sacrificial area and eating area. Dining rooms were small and self-contained, but with no evidence of windows through which the 'weak' might have seen the 'strong', unless of course the 'weak' were already inside the rooms. Bookidis and Fisher noted the rebuilding of one dining room in Roman times and pointed out the variation in couch lengths, suggesting that the larger couches may have been reserved for special officials, thus possibly reflecting that some were involved in the act of sacrifice and perhaps ate differently and/or separately from the rest. Indeed Bookidis feels that this Building T may have had a chthonic cultic significance in the first century C.E., bearing in mind the discovery of Roman Curse Tablets, invoking the dead and the chthonic deities. Pausanias, moreover, noted the very small area available to house the concealed images, raising the question of whether or not all available food was actually offered to those images.

The cult of Asclepius at Corinth has already been considered, especially regarding the ambiguity over the Lerna dining rooms. M. Lang argued that those rooms served both pilgrims to the shrine and visitors to the recreational area of Lerna. The meals eaten at Lerna may not therefore have been cultic in nature but tied rather to the recreational facility at that location. Many people attended the cult facility at Pergamum in 146 C.E. but most may not have participated in the cult ritual, even though they partook of a meal. Aristophanes in *Plutus* 676 - 81 informs us of the priest's surreptitious act of removing food for himself from every altar. This presumably means that other non-priestly

participants did not normally eat food from that table/altar and it thus raises the possibility that the food eaten by those participants may not have been perceived as 'sacrificial'.

There was thus scope in plenty for those who might claim that the food they ate at a temple meal was not definitely 'sacrificial' in nature. Jameson highlighted the fact that one victim may often have been selected for sacrifice out of each species but for large crowds of attenders, more animals would have been needed for the communal meal and this begs the question of whether all, or only a tiny proportion of the meat, was actually sacrificial in nature. Most likely, however, is that Greeks who participated at such events simply did not stop to consider whether the whole, or only the small pieces, of the animal were being offered to the god. We have seen moreover that even the sacrificial offering itself was not always perceived as purely 'religious' in its function and purpose. Some sacrifices were considered to be directed to gods for the purposes of thanking, honouring, seeking omens, purification or averting evil, but in some situations, the vertical relationship with the deity was secondary and the sacrifice functioned as an offering to the dead or to heroes either to invoke their power or to honour them or indeed as a sign of mourning, rather than of offering. Indeed Price maintains that from the third century B.C.E. onwards, the religious significance of sacrifices declined. Sacrifice became for some a social phenomenon whilst for others it was a meaningless rite. When it comes to the communal meal itself, moreover, multiple opportunities to consume 'idol-food' arose in temples, homes and halls, but the 'religious' function of the meal was minimal, many participants perceiving functions such as an opportunity for conversation, a celebration of special events, a reinforcing of social status, a fulfilling of social requirements, a sign of established friendships or merely as an opportunity to exhibit riotous behaviour. A whole range of viewpoints existed on the perceived significance of *thusia*.

#### 6.6.4.1.2. The Recipients of Sacrificial Offerings

Our research on Greco-Roman sacrificial offerings indicates that the issue of the intended recipients of sacrificial offerings was in reality far more complex and ambiguous than is suggested by Paul's blanket expression in 10:20 - δαίμονις καὶ οὐ θεῶν [θύουσιν]. Such an issue is important because if the intended recipient of an offering was not clearly or necessarily or unambiguously perceived as a traditional deity, then this opens up the way, as in the Torajanese situation, for a whole spectrum of interpretation concerning the intended purpose of the *thusia* - worship, veneration, honour, respect. The boundaries of these categories were liable to be blurred because the very boundaries between divinity and humanity were also blurred. Thus ambiguity, and consequent variety of viewpoint, existed on two interrelated levels -

- i) The perceived nature of the being represented by the image.
- ii) The perceived function of the sacrifice being offered to that image.

Once again, of course, the end result of such a situation is the extreme difficulty of reaching any kind of consensus on what actually constituted 'idoltrous worship'. Any

one person's definition of the boundaries and content of 'idolatry' depended, and still does so today, on how they define the nature and significance of images, sacrifices and communal meals. It was the broad range of feasible and valid viewpoints on those issues, and hence on 'idolatry' itself, that transformed the whole problem into a veritable minefield for the apostle Paul.

The complexity, inconsistency and ambiguity of the divine-human continuum has already become apparent. Asclepius evoked for many a wide range of conceptual understandings. For some he never was a real god, for others he was a man-god but for many, no doubt, his nature was of far less importance than his perceived ability to heal. The function of his temple in Corinth was likewise ambiguous. Demeter certainly had links with the world of the dead, particularly evidenced by the discovery of Roman curse tablets in Corinth. Sarapis, according to our evidence, took part in Olympian banquets and yet had the features of an underworld god. Priests of Isis incorporated a secular role as civic functionaries, being magistrates of the State. We know that the world of the dead lay close to the heart of Greco-Roman society and that in the 2nd and 3rd Centuries C.E., the dead increasingly were deified, and imperial images were taken along to graves. It is not surprising that in the Greek world of anthropomorphic conceptions of gods, a range of views existed regarding the nature of heroes. Sometimes both gods *and* heroes could be the recipients of sacrifice. For example, Paus 10.1.10 records that the Phocians sent as offerings to Delphi not only statues of Apollo but also those of generals along with images of local heroes. Similarly in Paus.11.7 there is reference to an image of Alexanor as a hero but an image of Euamerion as a god. We have seen, moreover, the ambiguity of the Emperor between the divine and the human. Certainly the most important sacrifices were offered on behalf of the emperor and whilst language may have sometimes assimilated the emperor to a god, yet the ritual itself tended to hold back. Sacrifices in imperial cult thus constituted a fertile soil for yielding ambiguities. The emperor was honoured at ancestral religious festivals, the emperor could be located in temples of the gods, the gods could be invoked in sacrifices to protect the emperor and sacrifices were sometimes made in honour of the emperor alone but copying the traditional honours of the gods. The 'Sebastoi' included the living emperor and no doubt some claimed therefore to be honouring the living emperor, rather than in any sense worshipping a divinity. Gaius wanted sacrifices to be offered to himself as a god, but whilst some called him θεῶν, others viewed him as a ἥρωα - demi-god. Lysander was sacrificed to ὡς θεῶ. Claudius and Tiberius on the other hand forbade sacrifices to themselves.

A wide range of conceptions thus existed regarding the perceived nature of the recipients of these sacrifices. For Paul's readers, there was likely to have been no clear consensus on the nature of the being(s) that received the sacrifice and thus on whether the act constituted worship or honour. For Paul, however, the matter apparently was simple. Such sacrifices were offered δαίμονις καὶ οὐ θεῶ - "to demons and not to a god [God]". Part of Paul's argument, based on his apparent belief in the reality of 'demons',

may have been that some Corinthians' imminent return to idolatry was evidence of their having been deceived by those very demons. It is to the nature of such beings that we now turn for other viewpoints.

#### 6.6.4.1.3: The Nature of *Daimonia*

Space forbids detailed presentation of Greco-Roman texts, but a brief summary will now be given of a word-study, across a range of texts, which was carried out to determine the various meanings which the Greco-Roman world attached to the terms δαίμων-ονος m. and δαιμόνιον-ου, n. As we proceed to consider Greco-Roman background, we note the work done by G.B. Caird<sup>68</sup> in which he traced the dominant view of Israel towards pagan deities, namely "... the beings whom other nations worshipped as gods were in fact subordinate powers acting under the supreme authority of Yahweh." Caird highlights the potential problem over the Septuagint's use of δαιμόνια in Ps. 95:5 - "We must be careful here not to read too much into the Greek word. To us the word demon tends to call up a mental picture of a little black man with horns, barbed tail, and toasting fork, but to the Greeks it denoted any heavenly mediator between God and man... Nevertheless, in hellenistic Judaism the term came to be used in a bad sense, although there was no reason in Greek usage why the word should not have conveyed the same qualified approval that Jewish thought extended to the guardians of the nations." The possibility thus arises that the negative connotation of δαιμόνια, so obvious to Paul's mind in 1 Cor.10:20-1, may not have been quite so apparent to his readers.

The 19 occurrences of the word *daimonion* in the Septuagint consistently involve a polemical use of the term to portray a critical and negative understanding of such phenomena. Our detailed study of these contexts did, however, reveal a number of shades of emphasis. For example, Tobit 3:8 and 17 uses the term to describe Asmodeus, τὸ πονηρὸν δαιμόνιον who has power to kill human beings and needs to be bound. In Tobit 6:7, the angel tells Tobias that the way to avoid a person being troubled by δαιμόνιον ἢ πνεῦμα πονηρὸν is by presenting a smoke offering. Thus the term πνεῦμα is brought into the picture by the writer and both terms are used to describe beings which annoy or trouble people. Tobias, in 6:14 repeats the term δαιμόνιον, though without the adjective πονηρὸν, and this context of evil, harmful spirits occurs again in Tobit 6:17 and 8:3. Finally Tobit 8:13 records the flight of the δαιμόνιον and its binding in Egypt by the angel. The δαιμόνιον is thus portrayed as inferior in power to the angel and the theme of the supremacy of God is taken up in Psalms where people

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<sup>68</sup> G.B. Caird *Principalities and Powers: A Study in Pauline Theology*. Oxford: Clarendon Press 1956 pp.2 & 12-13. Other scholars clearly have reached similar conclusions. Paige (*Spirit at Corinth* 1993: 270) maintains that "in *daimonia* was sometimes used to designate evil *daimones* in contrast to good ones, but this is never consistently done." P. Brown (*The World of Late Antiquity* 1971: 54) argues that "outside Christianity, the demons had remained ambivalent (rather like ghosts) .... They were as widely invoked, and caused as little anxiety, as microbes do today. Christianity, however, made the demons central to its view of the world." Brown, though, claims that such a development occurred between 150 and 700 C.E., thus leaving matters around 55 C.E. intriguingly uncertain.

are called not to fear the δαϊμόνιον (90:6). The δαϊμόνια are put into stark contrast with the creator Lord in 95:5 where the gods of the 'heathen' are called δαϊμόνια. In Ps. 105:37 the people of Israel are depicted as sacrificing their children τοῖς δαϊμονίοις and in v.38 it is recorded that they sacrificed them to the 'idols of Canaan'. There seems therefore to be no clear distinction between gods, idols and demons. Deut. 32:17 - ἔθυσαν δαϊμονίοις καὶ οὐ θεῶν, θεοῖς οἷς οὐκ ᾔδεισαν - stresses that the gods who received sacrifices from the people of Israel were not *known* by those people, and were in fact δαϊμόνια and not Θεῶν, a theme repeated also in Baruch 4.7. Despite the idea that pagan sacrifices were offered to δαϊμόνια which were *unknown* gods, Isa. 65:3 asserts that these 'gods' were also *non-existent* gods. Herein lies the paradox of the portrayal of δαϊμόνια as real and yet as unreal *within* the Septuagint, for even in Isa.65:11 it is then stated that those who made table offerings to δαϊμόνια have deserted God and thereby incur God's wrath and judgment. Indeed δαϊμόνια occurs in the context of the activity of those beings, in certain locations, as marks of the destruction and desolation wrought by God in judgment (Isa.13:21, 34:14; Bar.4:35).

The Septuagint thus uses the blanket, polemical term δαϊμόνιον to translate a number of *different* Hebrew words, as for example in Psalm 95:5 *elil* (worthless idol/god); Isa.65:11 *gad* (god of good fortune), though here we have textual variation since Codex Sinaiticus S has τῷ δαίμονι τράπεζαν [the *only* Septuagint occurrence of a δαίμων term] whereas Codex Alexandrinus A and Codex Vaticanus B have δαϊμονίῳ; Isa.34:4 *tsiyim* (wild beast); Isa. 13:21 *Sā'ir*(satyr). In Deut. 32:17 and Ps.105:37 (LXX), the term δαϊμόνιον is used in a highly restricted and polemical way. The Hebrew word *shēd* (demon) occurs only at these two points in the entire Hebrew Bible to refer to other 'gods' and 'idols', possibly related to the root *šdd* which appears frequently in the context of violence/destruction. Ps.90:6 (LXX) has *shūd* . (demon).

Although the writings of the Septuagint consistently portray δαϊμόνια polemically and negatively, nevertheless the actual relationship between gods, demons and idols is ambiguous and we are left with the paradox that δαϊμόνια are evil powers *and* non-existent, thus paralleling the apparent paradox between 1 Cor.8:4 and 10:20. An examination of the term δαϊμόνιον in the Pseudepigrapha reveals a recurring emphasis on these beings as created but fallen powers who are subject to the authority of God, even though they continue to be evil and destructive forces in God's world. Most of this material is dated from the late first century C.E. or later, as for example, the Testament of Solomon, 2 Enoch, Pseudo-Philo, Life of Adam and Eve, 2 Baruch and the Apocalypse of Abraham. The paradox of the perceived dual nature of δαϊμόνια in the Septuagint - as reality *and* unreality - is discernible in the N.T. also. The term δαϊμόνιον occurs 47 times in the Gospels where it repeatedly signifies a potent evil force which requires to be cast out of possessed people. Outside the Gospels, however, the term is used only 8 times in the remainder of the N.T. It is true that the word is consistently used to pinpoint that which is *opposed* to the one, Creator God, as in 1 Cor.10:20,21; 1 Tim.4:1; James

2:19 and Rev.18:2. Other aspects do however emerge in texts such as Acts 17:18 where some of Paul's pagan listeners in Athens used the phrase ξένων δαιμονίων referring to the preaching of Jesus and the resurrection. Rev.16:14 is interesting in its reference to πνεύματα δαιμονίων ('demonic spirits' RSV) and Rev.9:20 brings us full circle to the worship of τὰ δαιμόνια καὶ τὰ εἴδωλα "which cannot either see or hear or walk." (RSV) The emphasis here is thus on the impotence of such powers.

Thus the Septuagint, Pseudepigrapha and New Testament fail to offer clear or detailed criteria for distinguishing between gods, demons, spirits and 'idols', but rather portray δαιμόνια polemically as negative, evil phenomena which are set in opposition to the worship of the one Creator God. When we come to consider 'pagan' usage of the same term, however, we enter a very different world of conceptions and perceptions.

Classical writers used the term δαιμόνιον in a variety of ways to mean divine power<sup>69</sup>, the sovereign power from heaven,<sup>70</sup> and divine.<sup>71</sup> Plato presents Socrates as claiming to possess a δαιμόνιον or divine monitor which guided his actions throughout his life. Socrates was thus accused by Meletus of introducing new spiritual beings - ἕτερα δαιμόνια καινὰ such that he does not believe in the gods (*theous*) which the state believed in.<sup>72</sup> Socrates retorts that if he believes in spiritual beings, then he believes in spirits if spirits are a kind of gods. (27D) Thus Socrates establishes a relationship between gods and spirits, even if the spirits - οἱ δαίμονες θεῶν παῖδες εἰσιν νόθοι τινές - are 'a kind of bastard children of gods'. (27D) Though the accusers set the spiritual beings in a negative light as being opposed to the State gods, Socrates views his monitor as a positive guide and generator of that which is good. This raises a very important issue for 1 Cor.10:20 where Paul undoubtedly portrays δαιμόνια in a negative light, and in strong opposition to 'a god' or 'God'. Based on Socrates' viewpoint, the possibility clearly exists that in the Greek perspective, 'demons' and 'gods' were in a relationship which was not necessarily construed as being negative. The possibility thus also exists that the Corinthians may have failed to grasp Paul's true intent and seriousness as they pondered 1 Cor.10:19-22. Socrates' offering of sacrifices and his use of divination were defended by Xenophon<sup>73</sup> who supported Socrates' claim that the deity - δαιμόνιον - gave him a sign. Xenophon was convinced that Socrates was not bringing in something new. Indeed he concludes "And who could have inspired him [Socrates] with that confidence but a god?" (*Mem.*1.1.5) δαιμόνιον was thus employed by Xenophon in

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<sup>69</sup> Herodotus describes the conflict between the Aeginetans and Athenians. The Attic army was destroyed, according to the Athenians by 'divine power'. (Herodotus 5.87)

<sup>70</sup> Euripides speaks of Dionysus' possession of women and the Chorus refers to the power of the gods. (Euripides, *Bacchanals* Line 895).

<sup>71</sup> Plato in his *Republic* Bk.II 382E notes that the divine are free from falsehood.

<sup>72</sup> In Plato, *Apology Defence of Socrates at his Trial* 24C.

<sup>73</sup> E.C. Marchant *Xenophon - Memorabilia & Oeconomicus: Mem.*1.1.2 LCL 1923.



a positive way as part of 'sound religion' (*Mem.*1.20), although the arguments in Socrates' defence do show that the opposite viewpoint was also possible.<sup>74</sup>

Thus far, three concepts of δαίμωνιον have emerged - divine power or divinity, the Socratic 'divine monitor' and the evil or inferior spirits. Across the wider spectrum of the Greco-Roman world, occurrences of forms of δαίμων and δαίμωνιον can broadly be categorised under three headings for which some examples will be noted very briefly -

### A) GODS, GODDESSES AND DIVINE POWER

The term δαίμωνιον is more frequently used to denote Divine Power<sup>75</sup> whilst θεός denotes a god in person. Other uses of δαίμων include the sense of divine providence and power at work in people.<sup>76</sup> A significant 1st to 2nd Century C.E. example of δαίμων as the 'good genius' is recorded by Plutarch (*Table Talk* 655E) and by Pausanias (*Boeotia* 39.5), both of which references have links with chthonic spirits and the world of the dead. In Pausanias' account δαίμων is portrayed as good in the cult of Trophonius, in which people descend to Trophonius to inquire about the future, in a cult not unlike that of Asclepius and in which a man obtains meat from sacrifices.

### B) SPIRITUAL OR SEMI-DIVINE BEINGS, INFERIOR TO THE GODS

This type of understanding of δαίμων is found in the first few centuries of the Christian Era. Plutarch, for example, records the idea of demigods - τῶν δαιμόνων - as midway between gods and men.<sup>77</sup> Ideas emerged of better souls achieving transmutation from men into heroes and from heroes into demigods. Some even came to share in divine qualities. Thus for Plutarch, the demigods were of various types, could change their state and could manifest themselves as evil powers in the lives of human beings.

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<sup>74</sup> Another view of the relationship between gods and spirits is that mentioned by Plutarch (*The Roman Questions* 276F-277A) with specific reference to the Stoic philosophic school of Chrysippus which, he says, viewed φαῦλα δαιμόνια - 'evil spirits' - as instruments with which the gods exercised judgement on unholy people. The term in fact used by Chrysippus (3rd Century B.C.E.) was φαύλους δαίμονας - see Ioannes von Arnim *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta* Vol.II De providentia et natura artificis 1178 p.338-9 Lipsiae in Aedibus B.G. Teubneri, 1903.

<sup>75</sup> Only in *The Iliad* Bk.3.420 does Homer use δαίμων to denote a definite god or goddess, namely Aphrodite. The idea of divine power occurs also in *The Iliad* 17.98 & 104; Pindar, *Olympian Odes* 8.67.

<sup>76</sup> Eg. Lysias (5th Century B.C.E.) *Against Agoratus - In pursuance of a Writ.* Bk. 13 Section 63. Also Aristophanes *The Wasps* 525 - a toast drunk after dinner to good 'fortune'. Similarly Diodorus Siculus (1st Century B.C.E.) in Bk.4.3.4 - toast during a meal to the 'good deity'.

<sup>77</sup> F.C. Babbitt Plutarch's *Moralia* "Obsolescence of Oracles" 415A LCL 1936 p.378-9. Section 415B indicates how Hesiod around 700 B.C.E. thought of transmutation and Section 417B speaks of different degrees of excellence among the demigods. In Section 417C Plutarch refers to rites for the averting δαιμόνων φαύλων - 'of evil spirits'.

### C) SOULS AND DESTINIES

A number of ancient authors make use of the term δαίμων to indicate the power which controls the destiny of individuals and which thus determines a person's lot or fortune. This use takes a variety of forms -

- i) Homer uses δαίμων in an analogy which refers to a sick father attacked by some 'cruel god' - δαίμων . The father is then healed by the gods' - θεοί.<sup>78</sup> Homer uses δαίμων in a negative sense of a divinity and in a question addressed to Odysseus, says τίς τοι κακὸς ἔχραε δαίμων; "What cruel god assailed you?"<sup>79</sup>
- ii) Homer records Hector as threatening Diomedes, son of Tydeus, because the latter is a coward - πάρος τοι δαίμονα δώσω<sup>80</sup> "Ere that will I deal with your doom/fate." The good or bad fortune of human beings was thus expressed by the term δαίμων.<sup>81</sup>
- iii) δαίμων was used in the realm of the personification as the good or evil *genius* of a family or person.<sup>82</sup> We saw in Chapter 4.7.2.2 for example, that it was used of the *genius* of the emperor - ἀγαθος δαίμων .
- iv) A final group of authors identified the term δαίμονες with the souls of human beings now departed or indeed from a previous age.<sup>83</sup> Aeschylus presents Atossa, wife of the dead king Darius, as presenting offerings to the dead to call up the δαίμονα - 'divine spirit' of Darius. This was in honour of the nether gods - νεπτέροις θεοῖς, and the spirit of the deified Darius deprecates all further attempts at invading Greece.<sup>84</sup> Thus dead heroes and kings could attain a measure of divinity through the deification of their departed souls. In the term δαίμονα

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<sup>78</sup> Homer *Odyssey* Bk.5, 396.

<sup>79</sup> Homer *Odyssey* Bk. 10, 64.

<sup>80</sup> Homer *The Iliad* Bk.8.166.

<sup>81</sup> See for example, Sophocles *Oedipus at Colonus* 76; Aeschylus *Persians* 601; Aeschylus *Agamemnon* Line 1342; Hesiod *Works and Days*, 314.

<sup>82</sup> See for example, Plato *Phaedo* 107D (the genius leading the dead soul into the afterlife); Lysias (possibly) *Funeral Oration for the Man Who Supported the Corinthians* 78 (the fate of the soul is in the hands of a spirit - δαίμων - who cannot be reasoned with or persuaded by entreaty); Plutarch *Lives Caesar* 69, 2 (the genius who presided over the life and death of Caesar); Plutarch *Lives Artaxerxes* 15, 5 (a group honours the genius of a king by eating and drinking in a banquet setting).

<sup>83</sup> Aeschylus *Persians* 620. See also Plato, *Republic* 469B and 540C.

<sup>84</sup> See also for example, Hesiod *Works and Days* 122 (the pure souls of the men of the golden age who roam the earth as the protectors and deliverers of mortal men. These spirits were δαίμονες); Euripides *Alcestis* 995-8 and 1002-5 (the soul of the king's dead wife Alcestis was considered to have become divine); Lucian *On Funerals* 24 (δαίμονας as the spirits of the departed); Pausanias Bk.6.6.8 (description of Elis in 5th Century B.C.E. in which a dead man's δαίμονα -spirit or ghost - caused great disruption until a temple and offerings were made to propitiate the man's soul. The ghost was thus treated as a Hero who had continuing power on earth until he was eventually defeated and driven out of his temple by a successful boxer).

therefore, the divine and the human blended together.<sup>55</sup> In Greek eyes the worlds of the living and of the dead were not two separate worlds and the two merged frequently in the context of sacrificial meals.

## CONCLUSIONS

Bearing in mind that all this ancient material on δαίμων/δαιμόνιον concepts is derived from educated and philosophical circles of thought, but noting also Paige's conclusion (1993:267) that "belief in such creatures was not restricted to any class or level of education", we must consider seriously the warning from Foerster that "we can fully understand the δαίμων concept only against the background of popular animistic beliefs". δαίμων had a wide range of usages - gods, lesser deities, souls of past heroes, unknown superhuman factor, a factor which overtakes mankind such as destiny, death, fortune, a protective deity watching over a person's life, or, according to Stoicism, the divinely related element in mankind. The spirits appear to be superior to human beings yet not perfect. Thus imperfection and divinity are not conceived of, by the ancient mind, as being mutually exclusive. Indeed Foerster claims, in the context of Greek and Hellenistic thinking, that "there can be no thought of an absolute gulf between the divine and the demonic..."<sup>56</sup> This is an extremely important point because it raises the whole issue of potential conflict in thought between Paul and the Corinthians, the latter having only so recently emerged from 'pagan' belief and practice. Paige has argued that 'pagan' understanding of Judaism and Christianity was very limited in the first two or three centuries C.E., even among the educated, and that when a Greek heard the term πνεῦμα, he would have thought of it more in the conceptual realm of δαίμων (1993: 271-2). He then argues that the "δαίμονες of Greek-speaking pagans would have provided the closest functional parallel to the 'Holy Spirit' as Paul understood it, and as the early Christians experienced it." (1993: 294) Paige then concludes with the highly pertinent comment that the similarities between Holy Spirit and δαίμων "merely serves to point out how easy it would have been for new converts to link up a new concept, clothed in unusual terminology, to ideas that were familiar to them." (1993: 295) Paige thus argues for a gulf of perceptions regarding 'spirit' between Paul and the Corinthians in 1 Cor.12. Though the term δαιμόνιον was a term more limited in time and content than δαίμων, nevertheless the expression τὸ δαιμόνιον held a range of meanings for pre-Christian writers - divine, indefinite sense of the divine generally, fate, the good spirit in man, and intermediary beings, more specifically the evil. Although Paul clearly used the term δαιμονίσις in 1 Cor. 10: 20 with a strong and negative polemical edge, the possibility

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<sup>55</sup> G. Kittel Ed. *TDNT* Vol. II Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1964 Article on δαίμων and δαιμόνιον by Foerster.

<sup>56</sup> *TDNT* Vol. II p.8. The sheer complexity of the issue of the nature of the δαίμων is reflected by Burkert in his work *Greek Religion* 1985: 180 - "neither the status of a *daimon* in relation to the gods nor its character is defined, to say nothing of its conception as spirit... *Daimon* does not designate a specific class of divine beings, but a peculiar mode of activity ... There is no image of a *daimon*, and there is no cult." Burkert refers here to the early uses of this term.

nevertheless remains that a gulf of understanding existed between Paul and the Corinthians not only in relation to *eidolon*, but concerning *daimonion* as well. The term δαιμόνιον in ancient writings did possess a wide range of meanings which admittedly did include the concept of evil powers, but the crucial distinction between θεός and δαιμόνια intended by Paul in 1 Cor.10:20-22, might not have been readily appreciated by some Corinthians, particularly by those who did not *want* to understand the differences, preferring rather to savour the benefits of sacrificial offerings than to engage in linguistic subtleties and niceties.

#### 6.6.4.1.4. The Meaning of Partnership τῶν δαιμονίων

The evidence considered thus far for sacrificial meals in the Greco-Roman world has pointed very much away from the idea of sacramental communion i.e. unity with the cult deity through eating his body. A growing consensus exists in scholarship against the concept of sacramental communion at 'pagan' meals. We summarize briefly the positions already presented in sections 5.7.1. and 5.9.4 - Foss (1987) found no specific theology of sacramental empowering; Willis (1985) found too little evidence of sacramental communion in Hellenistic cults; Milne (1925) saw Sarapis Feasts as possessing no religious character and involving no idea of seeking communion with the god, though he did admit that outside Egypt itself, it could have been a different story; no clear references to sacramental communion were found in Aristides/Apuleius, Plutarch, Pausanias or in Athenaeus' *The Deipnosophists*; Meuli (1945) found no evidence of sacramentalism. Moreover, in Roman practice, there appears to have been no development of the idea of shared meals with the gods or of any concept of sacramental communion. Even in Dionysiac cult, the concept may be exaggerated and Farnell concedes that although the Greeks would have been familiar with the idea of sacramental communion, nevertheless such a concept may not always have been articulated or prominent. Gill adds that in the later period, the god was more in the background at banquets - more a spectator than partaker. Thus we argue against sacramental communion as the dominant background to 10:14-21, although equally it needs to be said that the meals were not purely social, for if they had been, then Paul would have had no problem with them.

If sacramental communion was not the primary problem - or even a problem at all - then we are left with the task of trying to interpret Paul's strong language in warning the Corinthians not to become κοινωνοὺς τῶν δαιμονίων - 'partners of demons'. (10:20). An early article by Hugo Gressmann<sup>87</sup> examined the 'table of the Lord' expression as understood by Israelites. He concluded "Aber aus dem Ausdruck allein geht nicht hervor, ob Gottheit und Vereher gemeinsam an demselben Tische lagen oder wenigstens ein gemeinsames Mahl verzehrten"<sup>88</sup> He then goes on to argue from

<sup>87</sup> H. Gressmann "Ἡ κοινωνία τῶν δαιμονίων" *ZNTW* Vol.20 (1921) p.226.

<sup>88</sup> My translation is as follows - "But from the expression alone, one cannot deduce whether deity and worshipper lay at the same table or at least whether they shared a meal together."

Deuteronomy that although the sacrifice was consumed in the presence of God, nevertheless the presence of God was probably represented in the image of the sacrifice and a place was then laid for the deity as for all the participants. Relationship to deity thus seems to be very much to the fore in Gressmann's thinking. Fee thinks he led scholars astray by suggesting, in a roundabout fashion, that 'altar' in 10:18 was equivalent to God. (1987: 470 n.41). The interpretation of Paul's phrase is tied up with the function of the genitive case and this has been a controversial issue. Two possible options are available regarding this genitive construction -

1. The genitive of the 'thing shared' among the partners, partners in 'demons'/gods', thus rendering 'demons'/gods' as things to be shared out.
2. A genitive of 'possession', 'partners of demons' or 'partners belonging to demons'.

Writing in 1933 Heinrich Seesemann held a position which for long seems to have gone unchallenged. The first point to be considered is that Seesemann, regarding the section 10:18-20 claimed that "Das Wort θυσιαστήριου ist hier nur Ersatz [a substitute] für θεός".<sup>89</sup> He thus viewed 'altar' and 'God' as basically equivalent. The result is that Seesemann<sup>90</sup> draws direct parallels in the following way - "Auch auf 1 Cor.10:18-20 sei noch einmal verwiesen, wo Paulus es als bekannt voraussetzt, dass die Teilnehmer an dem jüdischen bzw heidnischen opfermahlzeiten κοινωνοὶ τοῦ θυσιαστηρίου bzw. τῶν δαιμονίων sind."<sup>91</sup> Seesemann then claims "Nun scheint Paulus das Herrnmahl als Opfermahl betrachtet zu haben. Sonst hätte er es schwerlich zu den jüdischen und heidnischen Opfermahlzeiten in Parallele stellen können". (ibid).<sup>92</sup> He argues that Paul created this "body and blood" terminology for the Lord's Supper in dependence on the terminology of the nature of sacrifice. He concedes, however, that this thesis is no more than a possibility. Seesemann's argument may reflect the standard view of his time that everything in early Christianity must be derived from 'Hellenistic Mystery Religions'. Evidence for such a position is, however, absent. He argues that Paul views

<sup>89</sup> Seesemann H. *Der Begriff Koinonia im Neuen Testament* Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für Die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft 14 (1933) p.52.

<sup>90</sup> Seesemann H. *Der Begriff* 1933 p.102. Another scholar who feels Paul stresses the Eucharist as sacrificial meal is R.P. Brown "The Table of the Lord and the Table of Demons (1 Cor.8:1 - 11:1)" in *Church Quarterly Review* Vol.135 (1942-3) pp.93-109. Not surprisingly, therefore, Brown (p.99) takes the view that "the very purpose of the feast is to bring the participants by sacrifice into communion with an Unseen Power." Brown indeed makes a claim which we have queried throughout this research - "Again, it ought to be obvious to thinking men that a feast which issues from a sacrifice is necessarily sacrificial and cannot be isolated from the context of the offering." (p.99).

<sup>91</sup> My translation - "Also 1 Cor.10:18-20 should be referred to, where Paul presupposes that it is known that the participants of Jewish or pagan sacrificial meals are partners of the altar or of demons."

<sup>92</sup> My translation - "Now Paul appears to have looked at the Lord's Supper as a sacrificial meal. Otherwise he would hardly have been able to put it into parallel with the Jewish and heathen sacrificial meals."

*koinonia* as a religious term and that "das Herrmahl die κοινωνία τοῦ αἵματος bzw τοῦ σώματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ herstellt, das der Gläubige sich in der κοινωνία Χριστοῦ befindet - ("that the Lord's Supper produces partnership of the blood or of the body of Christ and that the believer finds himself in the partnership of Christ.") (ibid p.103). In footnote 2 p.103 Seesemann explains that the use of *koinonia* with the Genitive of Person is unusual but that "partnership of his son Jesus Christ (1 Cor.1:9) is only a different expression for the partnership of the blood or of the body of Christ (1 Cor.10:16) - wo *koinonia* korrekt mit dem Gen. der Sache verbunden ist. Beweisen lässt sich hierbei allerdings nichts." ("where *koinonia* is correctly connected with the Genitive of the thing/object. Of course nothing can be proved with that").

A strong swing away from the idea of 'Goddessens oder der sakramentalen Gottmystik' was heralded in 1963 by Sverre Allen<sup>33</sup> who tried to find the stress in the portrayal of Jewish and pagan cult meals in 10:18 and 10:20f. He adopts a three-fold position (1963: 131) which clearly opposes that of Seesemann -

1. θυσιαστήριου in 10:18 is not a code name for God, 'sondern meint durchaus den Altar und das damit verbundene Opfergeschehen' ("but definitely means the altar and the sacrificial event connected with it.")
2. "Die Wendung κοινωνοῦς τῶν δαιμονίων v.20 bezeichnet nicht ein wie auch immer geartetes Anteilerhalten an den Dämonen, sondern vielmehr die Teilhabe an den Opfern zusammen mit den Dämonen." ("The phrase 'partners of demons' v.20 does not indicate always any kind of share or part in the demons, but rather participation in the sacrificial gifts together with the demons.")
3. Any idea of foreign rule in 10:18 is erroneous. Paul speaks of the power and strength of the sacrificial meal. "Natürlich warnt er vor einem Abfall an die Dämonen, aber dieser Gedanke bildet nur die Folie für die Gefährlichkeit der fremden Opfermahlzeit." ("Naturally he warns about *apostasy to* the demons, but this thought forms only a foil for the danger of the foreign sacrificial meals.")

Allen concludes emphatically that κοινωνοῦς τῶν δαιμονίων is not to be portrayed as sharing in the demons. "κοινωνός mit dem Genit der Person ergibt als die natürliche Übersetzung 'Genossen der Dämonen'" - ("κοινωνός with the Genitive of the Person is given with the natural translation 'Companions of the demons'".)

These conclusions are very much in line with J. Dunn's<sup>34</sup> argument against the idea

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<sup>33</sup> Sverre Allen "Das Abendmahl als Opfermahl" in *Nov. Test* Vol. 6 (1963) p.130-1. A somewhat hesitant view of 10:18 is expressed by W.A. Sebothoma "Koinonia in 1 Corinthians 10:16" in *Neotestamentica* 24 (1990) pp.63-69 - "And yet in 1 Corinthians 10:18 the altar may signify the presence of God among his people..." p.68. Sebothoma points out that *koinonia* has the meaning of bond among the participants (p.66) and feels that Paul is constantly stressing the theme of unity and union of the members. (p.64).

<sup>34</sup> Dunn, J.D.G. *Unity and Diversity in the N.T.* SCM Press Ltd. 1977 p.165.

of union with the cult deity.<sup>55</sup> Regarding the concept of *koinonia*, Dunn argues "But v.20 shows that Paul is thinking rather in terms of fellowship or partnership - a fellowship expressed through participating in the same meal, at the same table". Likewise Seesemann's position has been challenged by the recent work of P. Yamsat<sup>56</sup> who has taken the view that *koinonia* in 1 Cor.1:9 and 10:20 is a possessive genitive whereas the same term in 1 Cor.10:16 & 18 is a genitive of the thing shared in common i.e. participation between believers in the one cup and one bread (v.16) and partners of the altar (v.18). Demons, argues Yamsat, are persons, not things. Thus he contends that we have no evidence for *koinonia* 'in' the god as the object shared among the worshippers. Rather, there is *koinonia* with the god as partner at the meal. Yamsat admits that Paul himself is confusing in shifting from the genitive of the object of the partnership (τοῦ θουσιαστήριου v.18) to the possessive genitive (τῶν δαιμονίων v.20) but emphasises that Paul is stressing both horizontal and vertical dimensions to portray the solidarity of community in the sharing in the meal taken (1992: 219). He notes that Paul in 10:20c does not use the dative δαιμονίοις after κοινωνούς nor does he use the genitive of the thing shared, but rather he employs "the genitive of a personal being of reverence, τῶν δαιμονίων". Thus, concludes Yamsat, "partnership in the cultic meals would identify them as partners, but not as partners belonging to Jesus Christ, but to δαιμόνια, because there is a different meal which identifies them as partners belonging to Jesus Christ (Ch.10:16-18)." (1992: 248). Paul, claims Yamsat, has thus used the δαιμόνια argument to portray cult deities as personal beings or divine beings that the Corinthians would identify with, and thus to show the believers that partnership can be a reality in Greco-Roman sacrifice. Yet this still leaves us with the problem that Paul had apparently allowed and even encouraged Christian contact with 'pagans' (1 Cor.5:9ff) and that for many Corinthians the meals had non-religious significance anyway. Yamsat's final argument may thus be feasible from Paul's perspective but does not necessarily incorporate or solve the Corinthians' points of view -

Thus, Paul's argument becomes centred not so much on the mere eating of sacrificial food but on his fear that they who are partners belonging to Jesus Christ, may in the end become instead partners belonging to demons. (p.249).

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<sup>55</sup> The view that Paul used '*koinonia*' to mean not union/fellowship with Christ or with any deity, but rather partaking along with others, is strongly argued by J.Y. Campbell "Koinonia and its Cognates in the N.T.", *JBL* Vol. 51 (1932) esp. pp.375-380. Thus Campbell interprets 1 Cor.10:20 as a ban on becoming partners *with* other people and *with* pagans, not as partnership between worshipper and deity. He notes in passing that in Judaism, worshippers generally did not partake of ordinary sacrifices. Food went to priests and Levites.

<sup>56</sup> Yamsat, Rev. Dr. P. *The Eklesia as partnership: Paul and threats to koinonia in 1 Corinthians*. Unpub. Ph.D. Diss., University of Sheffield 1992 p.241-249. Yamsat discovered during his research that the *TDNT* article on *koinonia* - still repeated in later reference works - is in fact seriously out-of-date and misleading on the issue of sacramental communion. Our own research confirms that none of the texts it cites actually support the 'sacramental' view.

With this much we agree, but the issue needs to be taken two further stages - we need to assess what Paul was actually trying to say in practical, grass-roots terms, bearing in mind our Greco-Roman background research, and we need to probe again the significance of our findings for 1 Cor.8-10 and for that apparent inconsistency which has troubled and divided scholars for generations. To these issues we now turn.

#### 6.6.4.2 AN INTERPRETATION OF 10:20 AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE FOR OUR UNDERSTANDING OF 1 COR. 8-10.

We have seen that the issue of 'idol-food' was a complex and multi-dimensional one. A wide range of valid viewpoints existed regarding the nature and perceived significance of images, sacrifices and communal meals. It became apparent in 8:4-6 that the existence of 'gods' and 'lords' was not denied by Paul, at least for those to whom such beings were still very real. Thus although for Paul such beings are not gods, they are nevertheless supernatural beings, the identity of which Paul reveals in 10:20 - *daimonia*. For Paul, therefore, there is an overlap of three categories *eidola*, *theoi* and *daimonia*. Paul employs the latter word as a strong polemic to the believers to be cautious of not falling back into idolatry. However, we have also seen that the Greco-Roman world may well have understood these three terms in ways contrary to those intended by Paul in his use of them. In using the twin terms *eidolon* in Ch.8 and *daimonion* in Ch.10, Paul is actually conforming to the dual view of Judaism regarding images<sup>97</sup>, namely that they were non-existent *and* that they were demonic. In Ch.8 Paul was fundamentally unhappy and uneasy about the believers reclining at table in an 'idol's temple'. In spite of this, however, he underlines the insignificance and nothingness of *eidolothuta* and of *eidola* in 10:19, a chapter which is calling the believers  $\phi\epsilon\upsilon\gamma\epsilon\tau\epsilon \acute{\alpha}\pi\omicron \tau\eta\varsigma \epsilon\acute{\iota}\delta\omega\lambda\omicron\lambda\alpha\tau\tau\acute{\rho}\iota\alpha\varsigma$  - 'to flee from idolatry'. We conclude from this puzzling Pauline argument that 'idolatry' for the apostle was not definable solely in terms of  $\epsilon\acute{\iota}\delta\omega\lambda\acute{o}\theta\upsilon\tau\alpha$  or  $\epsilon\acute{\iota}\delta\omega\lambda\alpha$ . There must have been something else in Paul's mind which constituted a crossing of the forbidden boundary fence which opened up into actual idolatry. We contend that it is precisely that boundary line which Paul deals with in 10:20-22. Several textual points lead in this direction -

1. 10:16-17 deal with the actual reality of the Lord's Supper. 10:18 deals with the actual reality of Jewish sacrifice. 10:20-22 deal with a possible future reality into which the believers could slide. The 'idolatry' of 10:20-22 probably remains still outside the experience of the believers. This is underlined by Paul's use of  $\gamma\acute{\iota}\nu\epsilon\sigma\theta\alpha\iota$  - 'become' - in 10:20.

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<sup>97</sup> See Deut. 32:17 = Bar. 4:7; Isa. 65:3 (LXX); Didache 6:3; Ps.106:28,37; Ps.95.5 (LXX); 1 Enoch 19.1, 99.7; Jub.22.17; Rev. 9:20; Deut.4:19, 29:25; Jer.16:19; Mal.1:11. See also b. Abod.Zar. 55a & 44b. Mishnah (AZ 3:4).



2. Paul contrasts the 'they' of 10:20a and 20b i.e. what pagans (they) sacrifice, with the 'you' of 10:20c. Pagans do this now, but the Corinthians could potentially become like the pagans in this.
3. For the first time in 1 Cor.8-10, Paul uses the term  $\theta\acute{\upsilon}\omega$  - 'to sacrifice', in contrast to his emphasis on 'eating' in Ch.8.

On these grounds we contend that in contrast to 1 Cor.8 where 'eating' is of concern to Paul, the climax of 1 Cor.10 is in 10:20 and it is at this point that the apostle reveals his most serious concern, namely the act of sacrifice itself.<sup>98</sup> We contend that it is in 10:20 that Paul uses a term which would have been unmistakable and unambiguous to his readers - the Greek word  $\theta\acute{\upsilon}\omega\sigma\iota\nu$ . The apostle is forbidding here actual participation in the carrying out of a sacrificial act. It is this act which in Paul's view sets up a relationship/partnership with  $\delta\alpha\iota\mu\acute{o}\nu\iota\alpha$  and it is this act which causes a believer to cross over into 'idolatry'.<sup>99</sup> Paul pleads with the believers not to do that which the pagans certainly do. Indeed it is tempting to speculate the possibility that Paul's serious view of this might have been occasioned by news of a believer's imminent involvement in such an act - or even that such participation was already a reality. In Ch.8, Paul was concerned about attending, and eating at, temple meals. In Ch.10 he attempts to define 'idolatry' and sets limits beyond which the believers must not go. They must not personally involve themselves in the act of making a sacrificial offering. 10:20 says nothing directly about eating but before finalising our argument, we must consider the two following verses which complete Paul's warning against 'idolatry'.

#### 6.6.4.3 THE COMPLETION OF PAUL'S CASE: THE CONTRIBUTION OF 10:21-22

The only specific and concrete detail revealed in 1 Cor.8, concerning the act of participation in a temple feast, is the phrase  $\acute{\epsilon}\nu\ \acute{\epsilon}\iota\delta\omega\lambda\acute{\epsilon}\iota\omega\ \kappa\alpha\tau\alpha\kappa\acute{\epsilon}\iota\mu\epsilon\nu\omicron\nu$  - "reclining

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<sup>98</sup> Meeks appears to approach our thinking on this issue when he admits that the question of the Christian group's boundaries with regard to idolatry and idol food are left "somewhat ambiguous" by Paul's argumentation. W.A. Meeks "And Rose up to Play": Midrash and Paraenesis in 1 Cor. 10:1-22" in *JSNT* 16 (1982), p. 74. Meeks asserts that Paul does not discourage social interaction with outsiders but then he affirms that "any action that would imply actual participation in another cult is strictly prohibited". (p. 74). Meeks fails to spell out precisely what he means by 'actual participation', and it is on precisely this issue that we argue for the act of sacrifice. It is precisely because of this issue of ambiguity and multiple viewpoint in the practicalities of cultic festivals that we can agree with Meeks' final conclusions (p. 75) - "the emphasis in Paul's paraenesis however is not upon the maintenance of boundaries, but upon the solidarity of the Christian community: the responsibility of members for one another, especially of the strong for the weak, and the undiluted loyalty of all to the one God and one Lord".

<sup>99</sup> Gordon Fee (*The First Epistle* 1987: 472) offers his view of 10:20 in a nutshell - "Paul's point is simple. These pagan meals are in fact sacrifices to demons; the worship of demons is involved." Fee, however, is silent - or at least ambiguous - over the relationship between sacrifice and meal. He leaves no room for a distinction in participants' minds between the act of sacrifice and the meal which followed. Fee does however add a challenging note (n.49) concerning modern man's rejection of belief in demons - "Bultmann's 'modern man', who cannot believe in such reality, is the true 'myth' not the gospel he set out to 'demythologise'. The cloistered existence of the Western university tends to isolate Western academics from the realities that many Third World people experience on a regular basis."

in a temple/place of idols". This 'reclining' in the ancient world took place on a κλίνη - 'bed' or 'couch' - and the action being carried out by those reclining in 1 Cor.8 was that of eating -

v.4 Περὶ τῆς βρώσεως οὐ τῶν εἰδωλοθύτων

v.7 ὡς εἰδωλόθυτον ἐσθίουσιν

v.8 βρῶμα

v.10 εἰς τὸ τὰ εἰδωλόθυτα ἐσθίειν

v.13 διόπερ εἰ βρῶμα σκανδαλίζει τὸν ἀδελφόν μου, οὐ μὴ φάγω κρέα εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα

Nothing is stated specifically in 1 Cor.8 about the actual act of making a sacrifice. Within the 'idolatry' section 10:1-22, however, the act of sacrifice is clearly highlighted, along with Paul's perceived recipients of such sacrifices, namely δαίμονιοις καὶ οὐ θεῶ. We have argued that the language of 1 Cor.8: 10-13 is of such strength and seriousness that it betrays Paul's basic unhappiness with the idea of the believers even eating in a temple context. However, Paul does not unequivocally ban eating in Ch.8, yet neither does he give unconditional permission. We conclude that he would prefer them not to eat in a place of idols. In 10:20-22, however, he is setting up a definite prohibition to which he appears to allow no exceptions whatsoever.<sup>100</sup> Thus, in considering 10:21-22, four related questions arise -

1. What was it that could make the Corinthians κοινωνοὺς τῶν δαίμονίων γίνεσθαι? Was it the 'eating' or 'the sacrificing' or both?
2. Which people were in danger of becoming partners - all or only some? those who attended or those who ate or those who sacrificed or those who sacrificed *and* ate?
3. Was there a fundamental difference in practice between somebody ἐν εἰδωλείῳ κατακείμενον (1 Cor.8:10) and those who δαίμονιοις [θύουσιν] (1 Cor.10:20) and those who drank ποτήριον δαίμονίων and partook τραπέζης δαίμονίων (1 Cor.10:21)? "Reclining in an 'idol's temple'" (8:10) does suggest a

<sup>100</sup> C.K. Barrett "Things Sacrificed to Idols" Chapter 3 of *Essays on Paul* (London SPCK, 1982) pp.40-59 makes the reasonable point "That Paul found himself in some difficulty over the question of sacrificial food is certainly true". (p.46). We cannot, in the face of 1 Cor.10:14-22, however, agree with his somewhat strange statement that - "but at no point in 1 Cor. 8: 9;10 does he admit the view that a Christian must never eat what has been sacrificed to an idol..." (p.46). A degree of uncertainty or ambivalence appears likewise to come across in the recent article by T. Söding. Whilst Söding does seem to recognise a difference between Ch.8 and Ch.10:1-22, nevertheless he appears unclear about the difference - "In 1 Kor. 10,1-22 schneidet Paulus ein Problem an, das zwar im Umkreis des Götzenopferstreits liegt, aber in 1 Kor.8 noch nicht explizit besprochen worden war: die Teilnahme von Christen an heidnischen Kultmählern (10,21). Dass der Apostel auch diese Form des Götzendienstes, die sich als Ausdruck grösster christlicher Stärke ausgibt (10,22), strikt verbietet, ist klar." My Translation "In 1 Cor.10:1-22, Paul tackles a problem which lies in the area of the battle of sacrifices to the gods but which has not yet been spoken about in 1 Cor.8: the participation of Christians in pagan cult meals (10,21). It is clear that the apostle strictly prohibits also this form of service to idols which claims to be the expression of greatest Christian strength. (10:22)". Thomas Söding "Starke und Schwache - Der Götzenopferstreit in 1 Kor.8-10 als Paradigma paulinischer Ethik." in *ZNTW* 85 (1994) pp.69-92 esp. 84-5.

passive involvement, whereas the "offering of sacrifices" (10:20) clearly portrays an active degree of cult participation.

4. Was the food and drink consumed in 1 Cor.8:10 and 1 Cor.10:21 entirely, or only partially, sacrificial in nature?

We have seen already that according to D. Gill's research, the general procedure in the act of sacrifice was for the god's portion, or part of it, to be burned on the altar. Certain other portions for the god were then placed for him normally on *trapeza*. The remainder was then eaten by the worshippers. We saw also that priests often took their own shares *and* those allocated to gods. The question thus arises as to whether the consumed, non-*trapeza* food actually was 'sacrificial' or not. According to Gill, at the *thusia*, the gods therefore received only that which was burned on the altar or ground. A space was laid at the table for a god and the deposits - *trapezomata* - were made there. Sacrifices thus had their origin on the table of the god but this does not necessarily include all the available and consumable food. Cult officials had rights to offerings on the sacred tables and in the Dionysiac rites, for example, sacrificial meat was given to named participants in the cult, but the meat consumed by the large number of those in attendance may never have touched the actual 'table of the gods'. Certain inner pieces - *splanchna* - were eaten by the sacrificers at the beginning of their feast and Johnson spoke of preparatory sacrifices - *prothumata* - at which worshippers assisted and then afterwards ate them. The *penetrabile sacrificium* was received only by the priest and was not brought by the worshippers into the *cella* - place of images. Homer in *Odyssey* 3, 461-3 describes the burning of the god's portion, followed by the tasting of the *splanchna*, and only then by the roasting of the remaining meat. Kadletz, as we saw, contended that the parts 'on the table' were normally not sacrificed but were dedicated to the god and then taken by the priest, thus once again raising the question of whether or not the food actually consumed by the people ever originated from the table itself.<sup>101</sup>

Gill indeed has noted several areas of ambiguity or inconsistency. He believes that even *trapezomata* were only nominally offered to the gods and that after their consecration, the gods had no claims on this food. He also notes that it is unclear whether such offerings were special offerings for heroes or heroes' extra shares of the *thusia*. Indeed Gill contends that it is unclear whether the *thusia* was a common meal of gods and

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<sup>101</sup> A contemporary situation is described by D.M.W. Chua, D.E.S. Goh and D.W.F. Wong in *Corinthian Controversies, Singapore Style*- Mount Carmel Bible Presbyterian Church Ltd., Singapore 1991. These Chinese pastors claim that if Corinthian eating occurred in an explicitly 'religious' context, then participation was forbidden. This however begs the dual questions 'What is religious?' and 'What is participation?' They contend that eating idol-food in the temple compound was an act that was "clearly religious" and "to present food sacrifices before the deity could only be interpreted as an act of worship..". (p.104). Once again we see scholars making some sort of distinction between 'eating' and 'presenting sacrifices'. These Chinese writers then give a fascinating example of a first month celebration of a cousin's son, in which the cousin normally distributed roasted meat and red eggs. If his mother followed ancestral religion, some of this food would be offered to their deities. The authors then point out that not all the food is offered because no altar would be large enough to contain it. On the grounds that most of the food has not been on the altar, our authors thus conclude that it is acceptable for Christian guests to eat it. (p.106).

men or a meal among men preceded by a food gift to the gods. He feels that both ideas may have been present at different times.

Although evidence concerning *trapezomata* is very sparse, what has emerged is that only certain people actually offered sacrifices. The majority of attenders did not personally participate in the act of sacrifice and the food which these people ate may well have had its origin elsewhere than on the actual 'table of the gods'. Thus its nature as sacrificial food may have been open to question and debate. Whilst great care must be taken in drawing parallels between Israel's practice (10:18) and pagan practice (10:20-21), nevertheless we note that Paul's emphasis in 10:18 is on οἱ ἐσθίοντες τὰς θυσίας - 'those who eat the sacrifices' - and that in 10:20 likewise, Paul refers specifically to the act of sacrifice. Paul thus appears to be thinking of specific people who were personally involved in the sacrificial procedure, rather than simply those who reclined and ate. Thus whilst on the surface level, Paul seems to say in 10:21 that the Corinthians cannot partake of the Lord's Supper and at the same time partake of a pagan meal, we contend that Paul is here concerned with the act of sacrifice itself and with the eating of gods' portions by specific people. It is strange that after using πίνειν in 10:21a, he chooses the word μετέχειν in 10:21b, rather than the more obvious ἐσθίειν. μετέχω is barely distinguishable from the idea of being κοινωνός - 'partner' or 'sharer' - and we have already seen that Paul makes a strong connection between partnership and the eating of actual sacrifices (10:18) and between partnership and the act of making a sacrifice. (10:20). Whilst it is true that 10:21 does refer to 'drinking' and 'partaking', nevertheless we contend that εἰδωλόθυτα *per se* is not the issue here, as it was in 8:10, because in any case Paul has set εἰδωλόθυτα aside as the basic issue. (see 10:19). Rather, Paul in v.21, is developing, continuing and strengthening his point from 10:20 by addressing himself to those people who might offer, and then eat, specific sacrifices, as part of the cult activity of a temple meal, and thereby draw *other* Christians into involvement.

Personal participation in sacrifice is the issue in 10:20-21 and this, we contend, is confirmed by Paul's severe warning in 10:22 - "or are we provoking the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than him?" 10:22 is Paul's final seal that in 10:20-21 he is talking about more than mere eating and drinking. 10:20-21 is the point to which believers must not go. That is the point at which 'idolatry' is entered and engaged.<sup>102</sup> The forbidden territory lies

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<sup>102</sup> Virtually all scholars appear to define 'idolatry' in terms of eating sacrificial food. Thus G.D. Fee concludes "And εἰδωλολατρία of course means eating at the temples". ("Εἰδωλόθυτα Once Again" 1980:193). Fee believes that Paul understood the sacred meal as "an actual participation in and fellowship with the deity" (ibid.). It is our contention rather that Paul's primary concern in 10:14-22 is with idolatry as the involvement of a believer in a specific sacrificial act. In his 1987 Commentary, however, Fee raises again the issue of whether Paul intends *koinonia* to be 'with the deity' or 'with fellow participants in the meal as they worship the deity by sacrifice and by eating in his/her honour.' His conclusion (*The First Epistle* 1987: 466) is that "most likely the solution lies somewhere in between". The possibility that some prominent members of the church may have been chosen to perform sacrificial acts in the imperial cult has been put forward by J.K. Chow (*Patronage and Power: A Study of Social Networks in Corinth*. JSNT Supplement Series 75, 1992, p.155-6). Although he omits any detailed exegetical or cultural background argumentation, P. Borgen ('Yes, No, How Far?' 1994: 40, 56) has in fact put forward the idea that the context of 1 Cor. 10.1-22 does involve the participation of Christians in sacrificial ritual.

at the point where a believer involves himself/herself practically and personally in the act of making a sacrificial offering. That which Paul clearly forbids is sacrifice by a believer. We recall that whilst the various Torajanese churches hold a wide range of viewpoints on the issue of eating, yet they are united in banning unconditionally the act of sacrifice itself. This is the point that Paul was trying to get across to the Corinthian believers, and thus we conclude that the difference between 1 Cor.8 and 10:14-22 is not the difference between 'social' temple meals and 'religious' temple meals, but rather the difference between degrees of involvement. Paul was uneasy about believers' relatively passive eating of *eidolothuta* in 1 Cor.8, but he was positively outraged by the possibility of a believer actively and actually sacrificing and then eating *thusia* in 1 Cor.10:20-22.

Paul's call for a clear-cut separation in 1 Cor.10:20-22 appears to arise again in 2 Cor.6:17. M. Goulder has argued that this controversial section 2 Cor.6:14-7:1 is an integral part of 2 Cor.<sup>103</sup> and he overcomes the apparent contradiction with 1 Cor.5:9-13 by arguing that *apistoi* in 2 Cor. means not 'unbelievers' but 'faithless Christians'. Goulder contends that the 'idol-meat' issue of 1 Cor.8-10 had not gone away and Paul thus applies strong corrective discipline in the 2 Cor. passage. Thus if Goulder is correct in saying that *apistoi* could mean 'faithless' as well as 'pagan', then we can detect a common link between 1 Cor.8:10, 1 Cor.10:20-22 and 2 Cor. 6:14-7:1, namely that Paul's great fear was that Christians would be seen involving themselves with other Christians in cultic activity, and would thereby lose all their significance and distinctiveness as the church of God in the eyes of unbelievers. Goulder thus views the *apistoi* as immoral/non-Pauline Christians. True Christians must not be seen in company with such faithless people within pagan temples. Paul's strong aversion to Christians being seen eating and drinking at a pagan meal thus reaches its climax in 10:20-22, when a believer himself might offer the sacrifice and would thus be seen to be 'leading' other believers to join him in eating and drinking. All Christian distinctiveness would thereby be totally lost and Christian community and pagan community would become one.<sup>104</sup> Such a total loss of Christian identity would fit well with Paul's deep concern for the visible unity of the horizontal *koinonia* in 1 Cor.10:14-22. To have a Christian performing an actual act of sacrifice, followed by other Christians eating and drinking, would be to render the Gospel null and void. Indeed, that level of involvement would make a complete mockery and nonsense of any idea of a distinctive community called the 'church'. Hence the evangelistic concern which

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<sup>103</sup> Michael Goulder "2 Cor.6:14-7:1 As An Integral Part of 2 Corinthians" in *Nov.Test.* Vol.36 (1994) pp.47-57.

<sup>104</sup> Our argument that 1 Cor.10:14-22 centres on the danger of a *Christian* performing an act of sacrifice is supported by a comment from one of the Torajanese case-study informants - "...kalau penyembah berhala sendiri yang melakukannya silakan saja asal tetap memperhitungkan beberapa pertimbangan etis. Kalau orang Kristen yang melakukannya, jauhilah itu." My Translation - "... if the pagan sacrificial official himself performs the act [1 Cor.8?] then go ahead, as long as you definitely weigh up some ethical considerations. If it is a Christian that performs it [1 Cor.10:20-22?] then distance/separate yourselves from it."

preoccupied Paul in 1 Cor.9 now becomes obvious and manifest in his viewpoint in 1 Cor.10:20-22.

Regarding Paul's perspective and argumentation, therefore, we see no conflict between his teaching in 1 Cor.8 and that in 1 Cor. 10:14-22. From the Corinthians' perspective and argumentation, however, even Paul's trump-card - the 'demon argument' - may have fallen on deaf ears. Such were the ambiguities, boundary problems and conceptual differences regarding the nature and perceived significance of images, sacrifices and communal meals, that even Paul's 'master card' may have failed to win the argument conclusively - at least in the eyes of some Corinthians. At least two writers have spotted the problem regarding 10:20 and the interpretation of *koinonia* - "It may be admitted that the argument as a whole is somewhat weak, in that it involves certain assumptions which Paul's opponents in Corinth probably did not grant." (Campbell, 'Koinonia' 1932: 378). A.D. Nock ('Cult of Heroes' in *Essays* 1972: 588), in underlining the centrality of horizontal *koinonia* in Greek cultic meals, at the same time hints at the conflicting viewpoints for which we have consistently argued - "There was a conscious fellowship of the worshippers with one another, rather than one of the worshippers with the deity honoured (1 Cor.10:20 is a Pauline *interpretation* of pagan worship.)"

That which has emerged from 10:14-22 is that, in the midst of all the ambiguity, boundary issues and conceptual differences, Paul attempted to draw a line in the sand, as it were, beyond which a believer must not transgress. The believer must not participate in cultic acts. Whilst in 1 Cor.8:10 Paul is concerned with 'reclining in an idol's temple', the accent in 10:14-22 is very much on activity - 'blessing', 'breaking', 'eating the sacrifices' and in 10:20, the pagan act of 'sacrificing'. It is cultic activity that concerned Paul. In the Lord's Supper (10:16-17) the celebrant blessed the wine and broke the bread. The believers then participated. At some of the Jewish sacrifices (10:18) the priests or Levites offered sacrifices and the community then partook of a meal. In other words, some led the worship through cultic acts and the rest followed. Paul's greatest fear (10:20-21) was that a believer or believers would be seen to take part in, or even initiate, a pagan sacrificial act<sup>105</sup> and that believers would then follow this by eating and drinking at the subsequent feast. The believing community would thus appear to be identical to the pagan group and would lose all distinctiveness and credibility in pagan eyes. As F. Hahn<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> Such a situation is a daily reality for the Torajanese Indonesian. It is all very well for a Christian to organise a Christian funeral for a deceased Christian family member, but when a 'pagan' member of the same family dies, the tables are turned. In such a situation it is likely that Christian members of the family will be expected to attend, participate in, or even lead, a pagan ceremony.

<sup>106</sup> See Ferdinand Hahn "Teilhabe am Heil und Gefahr des Abfalls Eine Auslegung von I Ko.10, 1-22" in *Freedom and Love: The Guide for Christian Life* Ed. Lorenzo de Lorenzi. St. Paul's Abbey. Rome 1981 pp.149-171. In the final stages of our research, we noted with interest Hahn's suggestion, with regard to 1 Cor.10:14-22, that "die gefährliche Grenze, die keinesfalls überschritten werden darf, ist das *thuein* also die Teilnahme an dem kultischen Akt eines nichtchristlichen Gottesdienstes (v.18b, 20a)" p.169 - "The dangerous boundary which must not be transgressed in any case is the *thuein* (killing for sacrificing) the participation in the cultic act of a non-Christian service. (v.18b, 20a)".

rightly pointed out in the context of 1 Cor.10:17-22 - "Hier gilt eben das Prinzip der Ausschliesslichkeit" - "Here applies the principle of exclusiveness." The whole life and witness of the Corinthian Church was in serious danger of being wrecked and Paul desperately opposes such a threat. We turn now to the remainder of the apostle's argument.

## 6.7 CHAPTER 10:23 - 11:1 THE NATURE AND LIMITATIONS OF CHRISTIAN FREEDOM

### 6.7.1. INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY OF ARGUMENTS

It is our contention that twentieth Century commentators and scholars have paid insufficient attention to the Greco-Roman background of 1 Cor.8-10. Their preoccupation, generally speaking, has been with exegetical work on the biblical text and particularly with the vexed issue of the apparent conflict between Paul's position in Ch.8 as compared to that in Ch.10:14-22. These chapters have been seen as a difficult and complicated problem for interpreters. What appears to have escaped the notice of scholars is that the 'idol food' issue itself was highly complex in terms of ambiguities, boundary issues and conceptual differences. The result was a wide range of valid viewpoints, not only about the terminology regarding images, sacrifices and communal meals, but also about the ground-level form of cultic practices and especially about the perceptions of those cultic phenomena in different people's minds. Gordon Fee assumes that the two situations in 10:25-27 are concrete and real and indicate Paul's concept of personal freedom in regard to *adiaphora*. [non-essential matters of indifference]. Fee then adds a footnote which opens up the whole world of investigation which we consider essential to our understanding of 1 Cor.8-10 and which we have sought to tackle - "Although obviously not all would agree with him as to what constitutes *adiaphora*!" (1987: 483 n.38). Indeed Fee concludes his section on 1 Cor.8-10 with a statement that hints at the ongoing and essentially intractable nature of the idol-food issue - "Despite this passage, the issue of personal freedom in matters that are *adiaphora*, and the limitation of freedom for the sake of others, continue to haunt the church. Usually the battle rages over what constitutes *adiaphora*." (1987: 491). Faced with such a complex and intractable problem, we have argued that Paul had no other option than to adopt two lines of approach in 1 Cor.8-10:-

1. To avoid the impossibility of trying to win his case on the basis of any single individual interpretation, Paul had to shift the basis of the argument from the individual to the communal level. Most of his arguments in 1 Cor.8-10 were thus formulated in terms of various general principles which were designed to create in the believers a turning away from their own entrenched individual positions and viewpoints and an adoption of a sense of community awareness.

2. To attempt some solution to the practical problems of the 'idol-food' issue, Paul also tried to demarcate boundaries concerning the permissible degrees of involvement for believers faced with eating 'idol-food' in various contexts.

Just as Paul has attempted to interweave his general and specific arguments throughout 8:1-10:22, so he continues to do so in this final section of his reasoning with the Corinthians, and it is this strategy which we briefly shall trace in 10:23 - 11:1.

### 6.7.2 1 COR. 10:23-24

Throughout 10:14-22, Paul has named a series of complementary and contrasting phenomena and has put these phenomena in relationships with each other. Thus -

v.16 'cup of blessing' = 'sharing in the blood of Christ', 'the broken bread' = 'a sharing in the body of Christ'.

v.17 'one loaf' and 'one body'.

v.18 'those who eat the sacrifices' = 'partners of the altar'.

v.19 'is food to 'idols' anything?' or 'is an 'idol' anything?'

v.20 'to demons and not to God (a god)', 'partners of demons'.

Finally in v.21 Paul sets in stark contrast the choice open to the Corinthian believers. They cannot participate in the Lord's meal *and* the pagan meal. For the believer in Christ, exclusive allegiance to Christ means that all other allegiances must be overthrown and rejected. The concept of choices is then continued by Paul in 10:23 as he takes up what was probably a Corinthian slogan<sup>107</sup> mentioned previously in 1 Cor. 6:12. Just as 1 Cor.9 functioned as an elaboration of 1 Cor.8, and particularly 8:13 concerning the need to curtail rights and freedoms for the sake of the Gospel, so 1 Cor.10:23-24 serves to illustrate the Corinthians' need to make choices. Although freedom is a valid part of a believer's experience and thus 'all things are lawful', nevertheless freedom involves not only the liberty 'to do', but also the liberty 'not to do'. Some things, such as involvement in 'pagan' feasts, may be within the bounds of Christian freedom, yet are neither helpful/profitable - συμφέρει - nor do they build up or edify - οἰκοδομεῖ. The thrust of Paul's argument is thus along the lines suggested by Eduard Lohse<sup>108</sup>, namely that

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<sup>107</sup> 1 Cor.10:23, along with 8:1, 8:4, 8:8a, 8:9, 8:10, 10:29-30, have been considered by at least some scholars to be quotations by Paul of words or slogans used by his readers. See Roger L. Omanson "Acknowledging Paul's Quotations" in *The Bible Translator* Vol.43 No.2 (1992) pp.201-213. Omanson offers a warning that although Paul may appear to take up and qualify Corinthian slogans, yet "in nearly every instance we can make reasonable sense of the verse without assuming that any part of it is a quotation." (p.203). Not only that, however, but as Omanson points out with regard to attempts to identify quotations, "To some degree any such study will be circular since we determine what was said or written to Paul on the basis of Paul's response; and his response is understood in part on the basis of what was written to him." (p.213). Dio Chrysostom 3, 91-2 did use the phrase "a pleasant thing is not necessarily profitable." He argued that some things, such as the arms, troops and fortifications owned by a king can be useful and bring pleasure, but can also prove to be unprofitable and problematic.

<sup>108</sup> E. Lohse "Zu 1 Cor.10. 26,31" in *ZNTW* Vol. 47 (1956) pp.277-280 esp. 280. My translation - "The freedom of the Christian does not find its limits in the Law but - and here Paul turns against the strong ones - in love, through which he also becomes responsible for the conscience of the other person."



"Die Freiheit des Christen findet nicht am Gesetz ihre Grenze, sondern - und hier wendet sich Paulus gegen die 'starken' - in der Liebe, durch die der eine für das Gewissen des anderen mit-verantwortlich gemacht ist." Once again therefore we see Paul shifting the focus from individual freedom to communal edification. Karl Barth<sup>109</sup> helpfully highlights the point of 10:23 -

The freedom of the Christian is the freedom to play his part in the upbuilding of the community.

Bruce (1971: 98) contends that on these grounds, Paul feels there to be no spiritual advantage to be gained by attendance at a feast in a pagan temple. However, the issue of whether Paul is referring to attendance, to eating or to sacrificing is left unexplained, and perhaps even deliberately ambiguous, by the apostle in 10:23.

That which does emerge clearly from 10:23 is Paul's concern that in their exercise of Christian freedom, the Corinthian believers ought to take very serious account of behaviour that is helpful and edifying. Thus, yet again, facing the minefield of individual knowledge and interpretation, the apostle chooses the communal route for his reasoning, and this is clearly confirmed and underscored by his next comment in 10:24. A literal translation would be "Let noone seek (the thing) of himself, but (the thing) of the other." The NRSV offers the rendering "Do not seek your own advantage, but that of the other." Paul's constant refrain is for the believers to look beyond narrow self-interest and selfish individualism. In the absence of any single definitive, or absolutely correct, 'solution' to the problem of 'idol-food', Paul once again urges believers to look away from their own particular 'knowledge' and 'interpretation' of images, sacrifices and communal meals, and to consider that which will benefit and upbuild *other* members of the body. This was Paul's only hope of tackling the intractable. In a real sense, 10:23-24 thus constitute the climax and consolidation of all that the apostle has argued thus far in 1 Cor.8:1-10:22. It is important to remember of course that Paul's communication in 1Cor. was not merely by a written text but by one that was most probably intended to be read out to the whole church. Those who contend that Paul is consistently addressing only the 'strong', need therefore to bear in mind the point recently made by B. Witherington III (1995: 36), namely that "each letter [from Paul] includes, therefore, what Paul is willing for an entire congregation to hear, or at least overhear where he singles out a member or group in the congregation."

Before laying out further arguments from his non-individual lines of reasoning in 10:31 - 11:1, Paul deals briefly with two specific and practical situations in which 'idol-food' would be encountered by believers.

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<sup>109</sup> Karl Barth *Church Dogmatics* Vol. 3 Part 2 T. & T. Clark 1960. p.305f.

### 6.7.3. 1 COR. 10:25-26

These verses reveal a sharp difference in Paul's attitude if compared with his view in 10:20-22. Where an idolatrous temple context was involved, Paul employed the two-pronged Jewish polemic that 'idols' were nothing (1 Cor.8) and that 'idols' involved believers in demons (1 Cor.10). His essential 'Jewishness' regarding 'idolatry', however, is set aside in 10:25-26 where he allows any market food - presumably some of which had been sacrificed to 'idols' - to be consumed by believers *μηδὲν ἀνακρίνοντες διὰ τῆν συνείδησιν* - 'not raising any questions on account of conscience'. (10:25). The word 'market' does not carry a definite article<sup>110</sup> and may have been a general food market. Clearly, however, Paul has sacrificial food in mind, yet reveals an attitude which certainly would not have ranked as being at the strictest end of the spectrum of Jewish attitudes toward such food. Questioning about the state of food would have been as natural as breathing for many Jews or for Jewish Christians who had a preference for kosher food, or even for Gentile Christians who had heard of, and were attempting to implement, the Jerusalem Decree (Acts 15:29). Paul however confirms that sacrificial food *per se* is of no consequence. (1 Cor.8:8 and 10:19). He then reiterates the same thought in 10:26, by quoting Psalm 24:1, to the effect that the earth and its fullness/contents are 'of the Lord' and therefore by implication, freely to be used and consumed by its inhabitants. Food was thus a neutral commodity, even if it included that which had been sacrificed. Even the eating of it *per se* was not an issue that troubled Paul. There was however one situation which did cause the apostle to attach a condition to his granting of permission to partake of food and it is to this particular case that we now turn for a brief consideration.

### 6.7.4. I COR.10:27-30

The specific situation envisaged by Paul in 10:27 is not actually described. Neither of course was the actual context of the consumption of market food fully described in 10:25. The assumption of scholars, however, has been along the lines of an unbeliever inviting a Christian believer to eat a meal in the home of that unbeliever. This seems to be a likely and reasonable view, particularly since the heavy polemical reasoning about the temple situation of 8:10-13 is absent from 10:27-30. Paul's tone is markedly different in the latter situation as compared to the former. In the context envisaged in 10:27, Paul's counsel is identical to that of 10:25 - eat everything that is made available for consumption without raising questions of conscience. Indeed the texts of v.25b and v.27b are virtually identical in the Greek. Paul's viewpoint in 10:27 is thus in line with that of 1 Cor.5:9-13, namely that believers ought not to cut themselves off from unbelieving 'pagans' but rather to mix with, and relate to, such people.

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<sup>110</sup> H.J. Cadbury in his article "The Macellum of Corinth" in *JBL* Vol.53 (1934) pp.134ff. has outlined three possible locations for this market but is somewhat pessimistic about the chances of further light on any possible links between market and temple. (p.141).

There is, however, a limit to this table fellowship and the border line is reached if someone at the meal points out to the Christian that the food is *hierothuton* - 'offered in sacrifice'. The 'informer' was presumably an unbeliever since Paul specifically used the actual Greek term which unbelievers would frequently have used for the positive act of making a sacrifice. In such a case the believer ought to abstain from eating, for the sake of conscience. Paul then clarifies his intention in 10:29a, namely that the believer must consider, not his own conscience, but rather that of the 'informer'. The latter person presumably must be either the unbelieving host, an unbelieving guest or a believing, but weak, Christian guest. Having set out this restriction, Paul then adds the confusing statement in the second half of v.29 "For why is my freedom being judged by another's conscience?" This sudden switch of perspective on Paul's part, reinforced by 10:30 - "If I partake with thankfulness, why am I denounced because of that for which I give thanks" (RSV) - appears to be a non-sequitur and has caused considerable debate among scholars.

The informant could be the unbelieving host or an unbelieving guest or a believing, but weak, Christian guest. As regards the matter of 'conscience', it is difficult to see how this would refer to an unbelieving host or guest, and we conclude with Bruce (1971: 100) and Barrett (1968: 242) that the 'conscience' consideration is with respect to a weak Christian believer who has attended the meal but has discovered that sacrificial food is on offer. Admittedly, however, it is hard to see why the weak believer bothered to attend the meal in the first place. It must surely have been well known that a part, or even all, of a pagan meal would probably have been offered in sacrifice. Two possibilities thus seem feasible -

1. The unbelieving host/guest, out of politeness, warns the 'strong' believer that the food is sacrificial, and that 'strong' believer then has to refrain because he knows a weaker brother is present.
2. A 'weak' believer takes the initiative to inform the 'strong' believer about the nature of the food and thus presents him with a dilemma. Interestingly Paul fails to use the words 'weak' or 'strong' at all and the text itself is inconclusive in identifying the informant more precisely. Paul's references to 'conscience' in the temple (ch.8), as well as in the home (Ch.10:23f.), contexts surely points to the reality of the weak in Corinth - they were not a fiction or a hypothetical construct.

If v.29b is an interruption by a strong believer objecting to being restricted by another's conscience, then the conjunction at the start of v.29b ought to be 'but', not 'for'. Furthermore Paul never takes such an objection onto the stage of further consideration. The best solution seems to be to link vv.29b-30 directly to v.27 and to treat vv.28-29a as a parenthesis which states the exception to the general rule. Paul is thus making the point that although he is happy voluntarily to limit his freedom to eat out of regard for a person's weak conscience, yet on the other hand he is not willing to allow other peoples' consciences to become the measuring stick for the exercise of his liberty. Ridiculous proportions could be reached if weak consciences were allowed to dictate all the

boundaries of Christian freedom in a wide range of behavioural situations. Scope for abuse could easily creep in and the 'weak' could take up a position from which they could dominate and dictate to the strong on a whole range of issues.

Thus although 10:27-30 has been a centre of controversy, that which does emerge clearly is that Paul makes a public statement to the effect that more than one viewpoint exists on this issue of eating sacrificial food. It was not a case of Paul being 'right' and the Corinthians being 'wrong', or even of one Corinthian party being 'right' and another party 'wrong'. The whole 'problem' of Greco-Roman cultic belief and practice regarding sacrificial food was that it displayed a fundamental ambivalence, a range of intractable boundary issues and a wealth of conflicting conceptual differences.<sup>111</sup> Whilst Paul did draw the line at believers' personal participation in the act of sacrifice, he was aware that the issue of the actual consumption of food was a minefield of individually, yet validly perceived, interpretations. The apostle had to investigate the intractable and attempt to solve the insoluble. Small wonder therefore that at times the basic ambivalence of the issue itself left Paul appearing somewhat ambivalent in his response.<sup>112</sup> Whilst Paul did attempt to demarcate boundaries and to distinguish between the issue of eating (1 Cor.8:1-13 and 10:23 - 11:1) and of sacrificial involvement (1 Cor.10:14-22), nevertheless he was aware that the complex web of valid individual interpretations effectively put any absolute or definitive 'solution' beyond his reach.<sup>113</sup> His only remaining recourse was to steer the believers away from their individual standpoints and to encourage them to think from non-individual perspectives. This was Paul's only hope of maintaining the unity of

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<sup>111</sup> In demonstrating the high degree of integration between the church and local society in Corinth, J.M.G. Barclay has highlighted the sheer complexity, and range of viewpoints, within the Corinthian Church. In his article "Thessalonica and Corinth: Social Contrasts in Pauline Christianity" in *JSNT* 47 (1992) 49-74, Barclay makes such statements as "There is no single interpretation of the Christian faith operative in the Corinthian church, but many different perspectives existing alongside or in competition with one another" (p.61); "... the Corinthian church contains a complex tangle of varying interests and opinions." (ibid.); "... it remains possible that he [Paul] partially misrepresents or misunderstands the Corinthian position" [on the resurrection of the dead] (p.63); comparison between Corinth and Thessalonica shows "how misleading it is to generalise about 'Pauline Christians'." (p.72). Barclay helps us to avoid simple and false categorisation when he indicates the possibility that some of the 'weak' in Corinth could have been among the wealthy members of the church. (p.68). Perhaps most significantly of all, Barclay warns of the importance of being aware "how Paul's perspective on the Corinthian church tends to control our description of them." (p.64).

<sup>112</sup> The ambivalence is, however, largely at the level of a shallow surface reading. We agree therefore with Delobel's conclusion that "1 Cor.8-10 appears at first sight as an incoherent passage, which very soon lost its relevance. Upon a closer look, however, one discovers a coherent whole based on consistent reasoning concerning a complex and many-sided problem." J. Delobel in "Coherence and Relevance of 1 Cor.8-10" p.14 in *The Corinthian Correspondence*, Colloquium Biblicum Lovaniense XLIII 8-10 Aug. 1994, Belgium.

<sup>113</sup> Paul realized that in a real sense, both the 'strong' and the 'weak' had arguments on their respective sides and he thus sought to mediate between these various positions. J. Murphy O'Connor realized this when he concluded that "through fear the Weak would have forced the community into a self-imposed ghetto. Through a destructive use of freedom the Strong would have committed the church to a pattern of behaviour indistinguishable from that of its environment." (*'Freedom'* 1978: 573). This mediating stance of Paul is viewed by C.K.Barrett ("Things Sacrificed to Idols" 1980: 56) as walking a "tightrope between the legalism of Jewish Christianity and the false liberalism of gnostic rationalism."

the church and of giving some sort of lead over the issue of idol-food. It should not surprise us therefore to find that Paul's closing words on this whole question (10:31 - 11:1) consist of a tightly packed series of imperatives, each of which is carefully designed to counteract and replace individualism.

### 6.7.5 1 COR.10:31 - 11:1

10:31 is introduced by the important connecting particle οὖν - 'therefore', 'so then'. 10:23-30 has revealed that more than one viewpoint existed among believers concerning the validity of eating 'idol-food' in a 'pagan' home. Indeed this problem of the range of individual viewpoints on images, sacrifices and communal meals formed the backcloth to Paul's attempt to tackle the whole issue of 'idol-food'. In addition to making boundaries between the act of eating and the act of sacrifice, Paul was forced to resort to communal, rather than individual, argumentation<sup>114</sup> and he is thus ready to state in 10:31 that, in view of all his preceding reasoning, *therefore*, the believers must now consider four imperatives. These concluding injunctions constitute a summary of all his previous arguments and appear to be presented in a chiasmic form which encompasses all parties to the issue:

10 v.31 The glory of God.

10 v.32 The good of Jews, Greeks and the church of God - that they may not stumble

10 v.33 The good of many - that they may be saved.

11 v.1 The example of Christ

In this way Paul summarises the four threads of his argument throughout 1 Cor.8-10 -

1. In 10:31 Paul calls the believers to do all things to the glory of God and he makes specific mention of eating and drinking. Such an injunction is at the same time a very broad general principle, yet spans every facet of the idol-food issue. Clearly in Paul's mind, God would not be honoured if believers fell from faith, if there was division in the church, if honour was given to false gods or if unbelievers were prevented in any

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<sup>114</sup> J.C. Brunt in "Rejected, Ignored or Misunderstood? The Fate of Paul's Approach to the Problem of Food offered to Idols in Early Christianity" (*N.T.S.* Vol. 31, 1985 pp.113-124) argued that Paul's style of argumentation regarding the problem of food offered to idols was "unique in early Christianity." (p.120). All other extant sources in early Christianity, argues Brunt, stressed the rightness or wrongness of the act of eating and all of them opposed it. He believes that the early church seems to have been ignorant of Paul's approach to the issue and that in later years, there was actual misunderstanding of the apostle's reasoning. The latter is blamed by Brunt on the negative effects of the association between idol food and sexual promiscuity, on the continuing influence of the Apostolic Decree, on the sheer complexity of Paul's argument in 1 Cor.8-10 and on the early church's lack of appreciation of Paul's ethical reasoning. (p.121). The issue clearly was not resolved once and for all by Paul's teaching. Built as it is on ambiguity, boundary problems and conceptual differences in people's minds, the issue continues to defy absolute or permanent 'solutions'. The church *still* struggles and gropes its way forward. Most modern scholars seem to have missed even the possibility of complexity. L. Morris (*1 Cor.* 1958: 123) is an exception - "Christians today are apt to find it a little strange that there was any doubt as to the attitude of Christians to meat which had been offered to idols. It seems to us so obvious that they could have no truck with idolatry. But it was not so easy as that to a new convert at Corinth in the first century."

way from coming to Christian faith. 10:31 thus summarises the entirety of Paul's intent throughout 1 Cor.8-10.

2. Paul's plea to the believers not to cause people to stumble (10:32) involves a wide spectrum of humanity: Jews, Greeks and the Church of God. The apostle clearly intends the Corinthian believers to recall his warnings of 1 Cor.8:7, 9, 10-13 and 10:27-30 regarding the matter of conscience. He is concerned not only over anything that might cause believers to stumble but also over anything that could make it difficult for unbelievers to become believers in Christ. (9:19-23).
3. In the following verse, Paul lays down the positive corollary to v.32, namely that believers should not seek their own advantage but that of the many so that they may be saved. Once again the theme of "pleasing all people in all things" recalls Paul's arguments in 8:1 ('love builds up'), 8:7-13 (concern for the believers of weak conscience), 9:1-27 esp.22 (seeking to set the priority of the Gospel above individual rights or advantage), 10:24 (seeking the good of others). The main thrust of Paul's exhortation in 10:33 has been well expressed by Bruce (1971: 101) - "to allow no attitudes or practices of his own to stand between the truth of the gospel and those whom he seeks to win." At the same time, Paul may have had in mind those already *in* the church, so that such people would remain in it.
4. Having warned the believers negatively not to become 'partners of demons' in 10:20, the apostle now presents the positive corollary, namely to become "imitators of me, even as I (am) of Christ." (11:1). Whilst Paul leaves the believers to work out the practical implications of these general principles, he is quick to underline his own personal willingness to practise that which he has 'preached' to the believers at such length. The example of Christ which Paul seeks to emulate involves willingness to serve, to suffer and to love, for the sake of the Gospel and of others. This is a recurring theme in Paul's letters - Phil. 2:7, 3:17; Rom. 15:2-3; 1 Cor.4:9-13, 13:4-7; 2 Cor.8:9, 10:1; 1 Thess.1:6. Within the context of 1 Cor. 8-10, at the end of each chapter, Paul embellishes every argument with concluding sections on his own willingness to be involved with the believers in this issue of 'idol food'. In 8:13 Paul expresses his concern for the brethren's spiritual security to the extent of his being ready to abstain totally and eternally from meat, if it is a cause of stumbling. The whole of Ch.9 constitutes teaching by example as Paul shows the absolute priority he places on the Gospel, above and beyond all selfish interest or guarding of rights. Paul's personal self-discipline, as example, is outlined in the concluding part of Ch.9. Finally Paul calls believers to imitate his own example as a visual aid of Christ's servant attitude. (10:33 - 11:1). In doing so, he concludes his argument (11:1) in the same way that he began it (8:1-3), namely by turning the Corinthians' attention to the divine dimension which alone and ultimately was the only perspective from which the dilemma of 'idol food' could be viewed and worked out in practice. The exercise

of love and mutual concern<sup>115</sup> was the only answer ultimately to the dilemma caused by the sheer plethora of conflicting, yet justifiable, viewpoints on sacrificial food and Christian involvement in cultic festivals.

It remains now to summarize the essence of that dilemma faced by the apostle Paul and to assess the strategy with which he sought to address it in 1 Cor.8-10.

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<sup>115</sup> The fact that Paul calls believers to set aside individual claims to knowledge about sacrificial food and to adopt instead a caring, communal attitude that looks far beyond self-interest, can be seen *throughout* the pericope- the priority of love (8:1-3); the conscience of the weaker brethren (8:7-13); setting aside rights for the sake of the Gospel and those without Christ (9:1-18); sacrifice of individual identity for the sake of the Gospel (9:19-23); self-discipline for the sake of the Gospel (9:24-27); threats to the corporate life of the people of God (10:1-13); partnership with Christ and His community (10:14-22); building up others (10:23-24); concern for the other's conscience (10:25-30); concern for God's glory, the church of God, the advantage of many and imitation of Christ (10:31-11:1).

## SUMMARY, EXEGETICAL CONCLUSIONS AND CONTEMPORARY REFLECTION

Evidence available to us suggests that Paul's detailed exhortations in 1 Cor.8-10 did not bring an immediate cessation of conflict in the Corinthian Church over the issue of sacrificial food. A letter (1 Clement) dated around the late first century C.E. from the church in Rome to the church in Corinth, and generally linked with the name of Clement, attempted to deal with the internal dissension which still plagued the community of believers in Corinth. Though dogmatism on sacrificial food is ruled out by lack of specific evidence, we do know that disputed questions were troubling the unity of the church (1.1), that the whole church was involved in disloyalty to the presbyters (47.6-7) and that the entire letter was saturated with repeated and urgent pleas for a practical demonstration of love, obedience and genuine humility. That sacrificial food constituted an ongoing source of friction must be held to be a real possibility. Certainly, as we have noted in passing, the sacrificial food issue continued to receive increasingly vehement polemic from the early Church Fathers and the problem remains today a contentious and intractable one in many contemporary non-Western societies.

This very persistence, we argue, ought to have acted as a clue to alert scholars to the essentially timeless nature of this issue. We believe that Borgen's recent conclusion is correct, namely that religious pluralism "was characterized by diversity and complexity." (1994: 58). Contrary to the consensus of scholarship that the complexity lies in the biblical text of 1 Cor.8-10, we have argued that the real complexity was to be found in the dynamics of the sacrificial food issue itself. That complexity first emerged in our consideration of the contemporary Torajanese situation. Nilsson (1961: 34) has argued that "the popular customs of all countries and of all ages are related." In an instant such a statement rings true and yet at the same moment it rings alarm bells. It is true that offerings to the dead similar to the ancient *Chytroi* on the third day of *Anthesteria* are still made by the modern Greek Church on All Soul's Day. It is true that there are many remarkable similarities between first century C.E. cultic practice in the ancient world and twentieth century C.E. cultic practice in Indonesia's Torajaland. Similarities and differences can lend themselves to parallel studies across time and space but claims for relatedness must be constantly scrutinized and viewed with the greatest possible care.

Complexity existed at every level of the dynamic of the problem at Corinth and that has been confirmed by the emerging Greco-Roman evidence itself. It is true that we do not know conclusively which of the cultic situations was uppermost in Paul's mind as he wrote 1 Cor.8-10. To a degree, it is true also, as Winter (1990: 222) has argued, that "it is not possible to ascertain precisely why some Corinthian Christians wanted to eat food in the idol temple, for no clear indication is given from the text." Our contention remains, nevertheless, that for every cult considered, the same basic picture of variation, complexity and ambiguity emerges. Our detailed research on images, sacrifices and communal meals



produced a complex tapestry which most Corinthians viewed from the inside but which Paul perceived only from the outside or, as it were, from the reverse, with all its loose ends and blurrings. The picture was characterized by the existence of a range of ambiguities, boundary problems and conceptual fluidity such that a broad spectrum of viewpoint was not only feasible but also could be argued as valid. There could be no easily attained consensus, therefore, on precisely what constituted *idolatry* and *worship* in such complicated contexts. As a consequence multiple opinions were held regarding Christian attitude to cult.

This minefield of valid individual interpretation and position was further complicated by the complex social mix of the Corinthian congregation, with its enormous range of backgrounds. A few at Corinth appear to have been members of high status groups (1 Cor.1:26), some provided homes capable of hosting meetings of believers (1 Cor.16:15, 19), but others appear to have been nothing like so high in status (1 Cor.1:28 and 11:22) whilst others were of slave status. (1 Cor.7:21-23). A number of passages, explicitly or implicitly, reveal a Jewish component in the congregation - 1 Cor.1:22-24, 7:18, 9:8-10 and 20-22, 10:1-13, 14:34, 2 Cor.3:4f., 6:2, 9:9 and 10:17. The potential for a wide range of perspectives on cultic ritual and on Christian involvement in such ritual, was certainly present in the congregation and in view of what we have noted about differences between Greek and Roman views of cult, Witherington's comment is of particular interest and significance (1995: 23 n.62) - "If there was a major division in Corinthian society, it may have been between enfranchised Romans or Roman citizens and the Greeks, Jews, or other foreigners who were not completely enfranchised."

Not only was there great social variety among the Corinthian believers but there was also spiritual variety which would have broadened and complicated the perspectives of Christians regarding involvement in cultic festivals. That there was a range in both the maturity and manifestation of Christian faith at Corinth is clear throughout Paul's letter. The opening sentences of Chapter 1 indicate that although Paul addresses the whole church and acknowledges the sanctifying work of the Spirit, nevertheless reports from Chloe's people point out dissension, party spirit and quarrelling among the believers. (1:10-11f.) In 2:6 Paul speaks of the *teleioi*, namely the mature or spiritual people who are able to receive divine wisdom and in 2:14-16 conversely Paul writes about unspiritual people who neither receive nor understand the gifts of the Spirit of God. Thus although in 3:1-3 Paul accepts the status of the Corinthians as being 'in Christ', nevertheless their actual behaviour does indicate that they are still in the stage of babyhood. The apostle appears to be accusing at least some of the Corinthians of failing to exhibit evidence of the Spirit's presence and power in their lives. We suspect, however, that this is where many commentators have gone astray, for they have drawn the conclusion that because there was division and dissension over the sacrificial food issue, then *ipso facto* those dissenters were unspiritual people. We have shown, on the contrary, that this food issue was a

genuine grey area and as such a dilemma not only for the Corinthian believers but also for Paul himself.

Repeatedly in his letter, Paul points out weaknesses in the life of the Corinthian Church and in so doing points to a wide range of attitudes and perspectives among the believers themselves. He warns about the *different* ways of building on the basic foundation of the church (3:10-15); he condemns their boasting (4:7) and charges *some* with arrogance (4:18); he rebukes the immorality of *some* (5:1) and the behaviour of *others* in going to law against each other (6:1); he indicates the existence of a wide range of male/female relationships within the church (7:1-40); he reveals a wide range of views on the role of women (11:2-16) and criticizes *some* for their shameful way of practising the Lord's Supper (11:20-1) which contributes to the weakness of *many* (11:30); he challenges the whole church to practise orderly worship geared to the edification of the body and built on the foundation of love (12-14); he criticizes *some* for denying the resurrection of the dead (15:12) and *some* for having no knowledge of God (15:34).

The church at Corinth was far from even or uniform.<sup>1</sup> There was immense range and complexity even within its body of believers. Our purpose in this brief survey of the letter is not to highlight the immorality of the Corinthians, for that, though undeniable from Paul's perspective, has nevertheless been reported almost *ad nauseam* and probably exaggerated by its 20th century press. Nor is it our purpose to underline the spiritual immaturity of the Corinthian believers, for the link between belief and behaviour would not necessarily have been readily or easily made by converts from other ancient religions. Our purpose is simply to 'complete' the highly complex picture of sacrificial food in the mid first century C.E. The nature of this food issue *per se* was one of extreme complication, as we have argued throughout, but that complexity was further compounded by the wide range of personalities, positions and attitudes represented within that church at Corinth. The situation which confronted Paul was indeed a veritable minefield and it is into similar contemporary situations that modern missionaries still tread at their peril. Faced with such a dilemma, Paul, we have argued, adopted a two-pronged strategy in an approach broadly hinted at in a recent article by T. Soding.<sup>2</sup> The latter realizes that the issues of 1 Cor.8-10 are both ethical and theological and thus argues, regarding Paul's methodology - "Eben deshalb diskutiert er die Götzenopferfrage nicht nur als Problem der rechten Praxis, sondern zugleich als Problem der rechten Einstellung zum Evangelium." (My Translation "Because of that, he discusses the question of idol sacrifice not only as a problem of right practice but also as a problem of the right attitude to the Gospel.") The sheer complexity

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<sup>1</sup> MacMullen's conclusion from the context of corruption among people who are "manifestly believers" is to say "But of course there are Christians and Christians." This was no doubt applicable to a church such as that in Corinth, with its immense variety. See "What Difference did Christianity make?" in *Historia* 35 (1986) p.338.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Soding "Starke und Schwache - Der Götzenopferstreit in 1 Kor 8-10 als Paradigma paulinischer Ethik" in *ZNTW* 85 (1994) pp.69-92 esp. p.85.

of the food issue and the multiplicity of valid individual viewpoints evoked by it left Paul with no choice but to tackle it partly at the level of *praxis* but mostly at the level of *attitude*. This is precisely what we have argued throughout this thesis and it is primarily in these two areas that new light has been shed on the biblical text.

For centuries, controversy has centred on the thorny issue of the apparent contradiction between Paul's teaching in 1 Cor.8 and that in 1 Cor.10:1-22. The former passage seems to claim that an *eidolon* was something of little or no consequence, whereas the latter passage speaks of offerings to demons. 1 Cor.8 appears to convey Paul's neutral or positive view of eating in a temple context, subject to the need for consideration of the weak, whereas 1 Cor.10:1-22 portrays a highly negative Pauline position that places a total ban on participation. Attempts to resolve this seeming tension have involved an enormous variety of scholarly approaches over the years.

One basic approach actually consists of little more than a statement or re-statement of the problem but without any considered attempt to suggest a possible solution. Thus Conzelmann (1975: 137) takes up the popular position that in Ch.8 and 10:23 - 11:1 Paul supports the position of the 'strong', thus allowing eating as long as the weak conscience is not harmed, whereas in 10:1-22 he sides with the weak and views eating as dangerous. Conzelmann is unable to get beyond the comment that "Paul's argument appears to vacillate" and he poses the question of "whether Paul can argue both ways in the same breath." W.A. Meeks ("And Rose Up to Play" 1982: 64) sees the whole issue as a "particularly difficult problem" and whilst he recognizes the absolute prohibition of 10:1-22, yet he is left with the dilemma that this "accords ill with his [Paul's] more lenient stand in Chapter 8 and in 10:23-31." Some who have recognized this dilemma shift to more extreme exegetical positions. Thus P.W. Gooch (1987: 247) feels that Paul was more moderate than other early Christian writers and then goes on to argue that he was generally happy for believers to eat *eidolothuta* except where other people might be damaged as a result. Other scholars - and with them we are in basic agreement, though via a different line of argument - have concluded that the conflict between 1 Cor.8 and 10:1-22 can actually be resolved on the basis of Paul's overall negative view of Christian involvement in *cultic* contexts. Thus J.A. Davis (1982: 11) feels Paul provides a "blanket condemnation" throughout 1 Cor.8:1 - 10:22 on ethical and theological grounds. Whilst Davis does see differences of setting between 8:1 - 10:22 and 10:23 - 11:1, he nevertheless fails to detect the different degrees of Christian involvement, for which we have argued, between 8:1-13 and 10:14-22.

The view that Paul totally condemned any Christian's eating of *eidolothuta* in a temple context was put forward by W. Lock a century ago. Our feeling that Lock's view resulted from somewhat uncritical thinking is confirmed, however, by his statement that

“to go there at all is an act of idolatry.”<sup>3</sup> G.D. Fee is of the opinion that Paul’s principle in 8:9 actually amounts in practice to a prohibition on the grounds that if the strong are *not* seen, we cannot argue that their eating (8:10) is therefore permissible. (1980: 189). Fee attempts to solve the conflict between 8:1-13 and 10:14-22 by claiming that the former is Paul’s indicative, while the latter is his imperative. (1987: 363 n.23). This is by no means a complete answer, however. We would argue, for example, that 8:1-13 also involves Paul’s imperatives.<sup>4</sup> Other attempts to resolve the tension are far from convincing. H. Songer (1983: 366 and 372) argues that Paul himself took a hard line in 8:13 but gave others freedom of choice. Songer then claims that Paul’s conclusion in 10:14-22 did not relate to the wider issue of eating *eidolothuta* but only to eating in a cultic temple context, the implication being that Ch.8 may have been non-cultic and non-temple. A similarly puzzling approach is that by Belleville (1987: 28-9) who recognizes the tension but tries to resolve it by arguing that both 1 Cor.8 and 10:23 - 11:1 deal with food that has been sacrificed and then sold in the market. She fails to acknowledge the temple context of 1 Cor.8:1-13 and her attempt to distinguish between ‘idolatrous food’ and ‘idolatrous worship’ is not convincing. J.C. Brunt is somewhat nearer the mark in recognizing the problem and claiming that 10:1-22 deals with idolatry rather than idol food. However he remains convinced, like most scholars, that Paul allows eating in Ch.8, unless it offends, and he offers no real attempted solution to the conflict, merely passing the comment that 10:1-22 remains “somewhat parenthetical”. (1985: 114 and 122).

A number of scholars have adopted the attractive theory that the meals in 1 Cor.8 were social, and thus tolerable in Paul’s eyes, whereas those in 1 Cor.10:1-22 were religious and consequently prohibited by the apostle. Such a position is that of B.N. Fisk (1989: 63-4) who argues that the *nature* of the meal, not its content or location, was crucial. He contends that some were ‘idolatrous’ whereas others were not. His idea that Ch.10 involved ‘idolatrous’ meals fails to take account of, or to explain, how this differed from 8:10. Indeed the text itself shows no such dichotomy between the social and the religious, and in any case, as we have consistently argued, the ancient world knew no such distinction. Delobel argues that Paul’s view of *eidolothuta* did vary according to cultural and cultic context, but that although eating was allowed in principle in Ch.8 and 10:23 - 11:1, nevertheless in practice it was “discouraged if not even forbidden.” (1994:2-3). An imagined difference in the kinds of feasts held in temple grounds is also the solution attempted by W.H. Lawson (1984: 94 and 104-5) who makes the strange assertion that whereas 1 Cor.9:14 - 10:22 involves real personal danger for those who participate, yet 1

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<sup>3</sup> W. Lock “1 Corinthians VIII.1-9. A Suggestion” in *The Expositor*. Fifth Series. Vol.6 (1897) Hodder and Stoughton p.72.

<sup>4</sup> We thus remain skeptical of Broneer’s opinion that although Paul did consider the needs of the weak, nevertheless he “... would not have refused an invitation from his non-Christian friends to a feast in a pagan temple...” (D. Broneer “Corinth: Center of St. Paul’s Missionary Work in Greece” in *The Biblical Archaeologist* Vol.14 (1951) p.96.

Cor.8:1-13 and 10:23 - 11:1 involve “no personal danger”. His analysis appears to ignore such passages as 1 Cor.8:9-13. The argument centred on non-cultic meals in Ch.8 as opposed to cultic meals in 10:1-22 is taken up by W. Willis who, like Magee (1988), believes that the tension can be eased if we allow that in Ch.8, Paul models his argument on the Corinthian perspective, whereas in Ch.10 he follows his own agenda. Willis nevertheless fails to reconcile the two chapters and he appears somewhat vague and ambiguous in saying that in 8:9 Paul “restricts their claim about Christian ‘permission’ or ‘rights’.” (“An Apostolic Apologia?” 1985: 40). He also argues that in 10:14-30 Paul gives an “explicit treatment of a specific situation”, but surely Ch.8 was also explicit and specific.

L. Cope is worthy of mention if only because he combines three weaknesses in his work. Firstly he argues that 10:1-22 is about sacramentalism. Secondly he is typical of the many scholars who have resorted to letter partition theories in a desperate attempt to solve the alleged tension between 8:1-13 and 10:1-22. He thus views 10:1-22 as an interpolation by a later editor intended to bring Paul into line with the dominant anti-temple worship position of the church a generation later. (1990: 115 and 123). Thirdly, Lamar fails to resolve the two apparently conflicting Pauline views, his distinctive contribution to scholarship being his willingness actually to *admit* and state the failure of partition theory to *solve* the tension.

Our own argument has been that the apparent tension between 8:1-13 and 10:1-22 can indeed be resolved on both background and exegetical grounds. Even if we allow that in Ch.8 Paul was happy for the Corinthians to eat, subject to the weak conscience, the fact remains that the weak were always liable to be present on such occasions. On top of this we noted the severe negative polemical content in every one of the verses in 8:7-13. The sheer severity of this latter section suggests that Paul was not in fact happy for them to eat and this moreover is underlined by his repeated and strong emphasis in Ch.9 on the need to be willing to *give up* rights. We argued that to all practical intents and purposes, Paul was in effect forbidding the consumption of food in places of images in 8:1-13. If this accurately reflects the reality of the situation, then the supposed tension between 8:1-13 and 10:1-22 is immediately and significantly reduced. The tension can then be further reduced to the point of elimination, if we turn to consider the major emphases of these two sections of the biblical text.

In 8:1-13 Paul is concerned with those who recline in an idol’s temple. (8:10). We have seen that such reclining in the Roman period *may* have been in an open area, perhaps an athletic location, where those eating would have been relatively accessible to the gaze of ‘weak’ observers. The emphasis in Ch.8 is on the consumption of food. In Ch.10:1-22, by contrast, Paul uses O.T. illustrations to introduce the theme of ‘idolatry’, a term not actually used in 8:1-13. At key places in Ch.10 Paul uses a number of command verbs which are verbs of *becoming*, rather than of already *being* -

v.7 μηδὲ εἰδωλολάτραι γίνεσθε

v.14 φεύγετε ἀπὸ [away from] τῆς εἰδωλολατρίας

v.20 οὐ θέλω δὲ ὑμᾶς κοινωνοὺς τῶν δαιμονίων γίνεσθαι

We contend that in Ch.10 Paul is talking about those who not only participate in communal meals but who personally involve themselves in an act of sacrificial offering. This was the level of commitment which is forbidden by *all* Torajanese church denominations, without exception.

Ch.10 thus bans three acts -

v.20 the act of making a sacrificial offering

v.21a the act of drinking the cup of demons

v.21b the act of partaking of the table of demons

Our case is thus that in practice, Paul did attempt to present an absolute argument in order to erect a behavioural boundary beyond which the Corinthians were not to go. The acts referred to in 1 Cor.10:20-22 were those carried out by specific people, probably priests and other sacrificial officials and involving the sacrificial table, and not performed by the majority of people who attended, whose involvement was rather to recline and consume food, (Ch.8) but not to make actual sacrificial offerings. We believe that such a distinction serves to harmonize 8:1-13 with 10:1-22.

In order to highlight this distinction, it may well be that Paul abandoned the term *eidolon* with its pre-Christian associations of unreality and humanity, and chose the term *daimonion* to shock his readers into realising the danger of a believer making actual offerings. Whether or not such a tactic cut any ice with his readers is, however, problematic, for we saw also the possible range and ambiguity of *both* those terms. In any case we have established that Paul was not arguing that sacrificial offerings brought the Corinthian believers into sacramental communion with demons, but rather that the horizontal communion of believers as a sacrificing and eating group at cultic festivals made a total nonsense of their belonging to the communion of Christ. If a Christian offered a sacrifice (10:20), then this would incorporate in the act all those Christians present and would constitute idolatrous worship even if many only *ate* the food. The whole idea of a communion of believers belonging, and loyal, to Christ would have been seriously damaged and the testimony of the church towards unbelievers would have been drastically undermined. This helps to explain the Pauline emphasis in 10:14-22 on the horizontal community of those belonging to Christ. Any distinctiveness of those who were members of the fellowship of Jesus Christ would have been completely lost. Such a sight at a cultic festival would have destroyed the credibility of the church of Christ in Corinth. After all, it was pagan perception and reception of the Gospel which was consistently uppermost in the apostle's mind. This helps to explain Paul's tortuous argumentation in Ch.9, his extended build-up in 10:1-19 and the intense vehemence of his onslaught in 10:20-22.

Thus we have argued for the unity and coherence of 1 Cor.8-10. These three chapters are not partitioned portions of letters but rather they complement, and do not

contradict, one another. Indeed we agree wholeheartedly with Prof. Best<sup>5</sup> when he poses the question "Is it too innocent to say that this is a letter and that perhaps we spend too much time looking for deep structures?" He concludes that in letter-writing "we continually take up matters, deal partly with them, are led off to another subject, and then return to what we were dealing with." After all, Paul's communication was a letter to a church, not a Doctoral Dissertation compiled over a protracted period of time. Because of that, we have sought to beware of over-complicating and over-categorizing issues. The complexity of the sacrificial food issue has been underestimated by scholarship and one of the reasons for that may well be its use of neat divisions which might seem suitable for article or dissertation methodology and presentation but which simply do not tally with the ancient world. Similarly, although we have been engaged in close reading of the biblical text, especially in 8:1-13 and 10:14-22, nevertheless we have sought at the same time to pay attention to the *general* thrust and *general* themes which would have impacted the readers/listeners. We believe this to be crucial because many of Paul's arguments in 1 Cor.8-10 were indeed *general* in nature and it is on this note that we move towards the completion of our summary and conclusion.

During the discussion at the Rome Colloquium, (1981: 245) C.K. Barrett drew his conclusion regarding the apostle's treatment of the conflict at Corinth over sacrificial food - "What Paul excludes is a solution imposed from the top. This is something he never contemplates, never puts into effect, and does not suggest for the present situation." Our argument has been that Paul did not impose a solution from the top fundamentally because no such solution was available. True, he did try to set up an absolute argument in order to erect a behavioural boundary regarding the sacrificial act itself. Beyond this, however, he employed a wide range of relative and rhetorical reasoning devices in order to affect attitudes. We accept that Paul emphasized communal considerations because of his desire to strengthen the whole church in the face of current disputes and divisions, but we contend that the food issue, with its range of intractable individual interpretations, compelled the apostle to adopt the only tack and track possible, namely the use of a wide variety of arguments each of which opposed the individualism that dogged this food issue. Thus Paul's succession of tactics for moulding actions and attitudes included consideration for the weak consciences of other believers (8:7-13; 10:25-30); willingness to set aside *exousia* for the sake of the Gospel (9 esp. vv.12, 15-18, 23 and 24-27); concern for others and especially for the church of God (10:23-24, 32-33, 11:1); and the need to aim for the glory of God in all things (10:31). Such a strategy was forced upon Paul by the impossibility of a universal solution to the problem of sacrificial food for Christians. The validity of the wide range of individual interpretations made the issue another grey area within the perplexing context of religious pluralism.

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<sup>5</sup> This view was expressed in discussion following Michel Boutier's paper on the unity of 1 Cor.8-10 at the Rome Colloquium *Freedom and Love* 1981 p.239-40.

This dissertation has been about the dynamics of the problem of sacrificial food in the Corinthian Church. In looking at this issue, we considered the current dynamics of a similar problem as manifested in Torajanese church and society in modern Indonesia. The problem is timeless and continues to confuse and challenge contemporary church life. A very recent article by Khiok-Khng Yeo<sup>6</sup> confirms this - "How one ought to respond to such practices in the light of Christian faith continues to create an *impasse* in missiological practice to this day. To advise the Chinese not to offer food and not to eat the food in ancestor worship may be implicitly advising them not to love their parents, not to practise love, and ultimately not to be Chinese." Detailed consideration of further contemporary cases lies beyond the scope of our research, but three situations lend themselves to brief mention because they demonstrate key ingredients of the essential dynamic which we have argued as underlying the timeless dilemma that confronted Paul in its first century C.E. Corinthian expression. That which emerges in every context is the lack of clear or unified consensus on what in practice constitutes *idolatrous worship* for a Christian believer.

Prior to 1945, for example, the Japanese Government set up non-religious State shrines alongside the religious Shinto shrines, in an attempt to foster national patriotism and to honour the nation's builders. However, the churches argued that 'religious' practices, such as the sale of charms, the drum-beating ritual to arouse the spirits and the use of Shinto prayers, were still being carried out at the State shrines. Many people saw these practices as semi-secularized and part of regular communal life, but for some they retained *religious* significance. The issues facing Christians were firstly whether or not they could participate in non-religious shrine ceremonies without denying or compromising their faith, and secondly whether the church could retain its witness to those both inside and outside the Church who still saw shrine ceremonies as fundamentally *religious*. In 1937 a Council of Churches in Japan agreed to allow Christians to pay homage to those whose memories were enshrined at these places but called upon those believers to seek to clarify the difference between such obeisance and the worship of God. The Council also pressed the Government to explain its perception of shrine ceremonies. Significantly, and in line with our consistent position on Corinth, D. Becker<sup>7</sup> argued for the extreme complexity of the issue, as well as for the genuine dilemma it created. If the church practised total separation from shrines, it risked not only alienation from the very society in which it was called to live, but also provocation of the Government into the persecution of Christians. If, on the other hand, the church threw in its lot with shrine ceremonies, then there followed the risk of wounded consciences. Generally the churches did remain involved in State shrines in the hope of pressing the Government to eliminate all religious elements. Becker's conclusion encapsulates the essence of the problem (1985: 213) -

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<sup>6</sup> Khiok-Khng Yeo "The Rhetorical Hermeneutic of 1 Corinthians 8 and Chinese Ancestor Worship" in *Biblical Interpretation* Vol. 2 No.3 (Nov. 1994) pp.294-311 esp. 308.

<sup>7</sup> Donald Becker "The Japanese Church and the Shrine Question 1929-1941" in *The Japan Christian Quarterly*. Vol.51 (1985) pp.210-214 esp. pp.212-3.



The problem that faced the Japanese Church was, in the final analysis, far more involved than a simple answer to the question, 'is it right or wrong for a Christian to pay his respects at a shrine? ... The fact was that individual consciences within the Church answered the question differently. Many felt that, in spite of the occasional religious ceremonies at the shrines, it was possible for Christians to go to the shrines and pay their respects to the nation's builders without performing any sinful act of worship. Others felt that any act of reverence in a shrine of that sort was idolatry.

This statement brings us back to the same basic hypothesis that we have argued for the Corinthian context, namely that Paul faced the enormous and intractable dilemma that individual interpretation yielded a whole range of answers to that crucial question "What is Idolatry?" It was not a case of any one person or group being clearly right and the other totally wrong. 'Idolatry' was not a fixed or absolute concept for the Corinthian believers and the difficulty of defining its boundaries was compounded and complicated to nightmare proportions by the existence of genuine ambiguities, by boundary definition problems and by conceptual differences in people's minds.

The same problem of defining idolatry is evidenced in the so-called 'ancestor worship' issue in Korea, so incisively addressed by Y.T. Pyun. Concerned that the Christian Church largely considered *chesa* - 'ancestral worship' - to be a brand of idolatry, Pyun, a committed Christian himself, sets out a 5-point Christian definition of idolatry,<sup>8</sup> against which he then measures and evaluates *chesa*. His conclusions make fascinating reading for he contends that *chesa* is not set against God but rather honours parents, that far from displaying greed, ancestor commemoration often involves bankruptcy in its effort to perform filial duty, that ancestors are never appealed to for protection or for prosperity, that *chesa* is definitely ethical and that the ancestral tablets, bearing the names of four successive lineal ancestors, are not idols or images but "simply remind us of the existence of our fathers' spirits". (1926: 34). He adds that even if people did view the tablets as being their fathers' spirits, then this would count only as foolishness - "Foolishness is no sin, if it only be sincere, it may be an effect of accumulated sins, but can never be sin itself" (1926: 36). One could imagine here that Pyun might have attempted to equate 'foolish' with certain of Paul's 'weaker brethren'.

Pyun thus regards so-called 'ancestor-worship' purely as a memorial service and he is highly critical of the foreign missionaries who had evangelized Korea and who, in his opinion, were guilty of "the superficial, therefore unfair views thrown on Korean customs and sentiments, which have long been so closely knitted together with their very conscience itself." (1926: 3) Pyun follows this with a cutting remark that "they [the

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<sup>8</sup> Pyun, Young Tai *My Attitude toward Ancestor Worship* Christian Literature Society, Seoul, Korea. 1926. pp.19-21.

missionaries] believed that the light was on their side, so they thought that they did not need to consult the other side.” (1926: 23). Paul, of course, was one of the early missionaries to the city of Corinth and it is precisely because of that reason that we have sought to stress the *Corinthian* perspectives on sacrificial food. Only by so doing can we hope to move towards a fuller understanding of the actual dynamics of the problem. Fact and value judgment constantly need to be separated. A one-sided view can easily, and in this case inevitably, produce distortion. Pyun objects to missionaries who fail to establish the Korean perspective on the ancestor issue and who try to impose Jewish laws. It is the defining of ‘ancestor worship’ as idolatry which Pyun rejects and whilst we clearly cannot draw direct parallels with the Corinthian situation and Paul’s dealing with it, nevertheless we have previously made the suggestion that Paul’s use of terms such as ‘idolater’ and ‘idolatry’ may well have been at the root of the Corinthian objections and conflict. Interestingly Pyun admits the validity of the same kind of objections levelled at Torajanese death feasts, namely the element of superstition, excessive expenditure and the shifting of attention from the living to the dead. (1926: 83-4). Some of course would label such elements as ‘idolatrous’ in and of themselves, but Pyun asserts vehemently that ‘idolatrous’ is not a word that could be used by any stretch of the imagination to describe *chesa*.

All of this brings us full circle back again to the core problem of reaching a consensus definition of just what constitutes *idolatry*. Pyun himself confirms our basic hypothesis once more when he remarks that “there are a great variety of inward attitudes taken by the Christians toward this problem [of regarding ancestor worship as idolatry], their outward attitude being the same to the outside public - that of tabooing it as a form of idolatry.” (1926: 23). One veteran missionary similarly recognized the great range of views but at the same time acknowledged the validity of Pyun’s case - “You are fortunate to see things in this enlightened manner. But keep it all to yourself, lest it should stir others, for every one has his own view you know.” (1926: 100-1). In a very recent article, J.H. Grayson<sup>9</sup> explains that in the 19th Century, thousands of Catholics in Korea were martyred over this issue of the performance of *chesa* but notes that changed political circumstances around the close of that century turned non-performance of *chesa* from a socio-political issue into a matter of individual conscience. Alongside this change there came the spontaneous growth of the *ch’udo yebae* service which was a Christian form of the *chesa* in which thanksgiving was offered for the life of a family member or relative who had died and who was in the first two generations above the person who made the request. A service of hymns, Bible readings and a talk by the minister is followed by a communal meal. By such a rite, Korean Christians feel they can now legitimately fulfil the fifth Commandment to honour father and mother.

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<sup>9</sup> James H. Grayson “Elements of Protestant Accommodation to Korean Religious Culture: A Personal Ethnographic Perspective.” in *Missiology: An International Review*, American Society of Missiology 23 (1995) pp.43-59.

Finally, the dilemma of defining and delimiting idolatrous worship is not only confined to East Asian countries. It extends to the realm of Traditional African Religion whose relationship to Christianity has been the subject of considerable study by Rev. Dr. P. Yamsat.<sup>10</sup> Our contention that cultic meaning and significance lie in the eye of the beholder and that conflicts arise when insiders and outsiders behold ritual from different perspectives and backgrounds, finds immediate confirmation in Yamsat's opening challenge, namely that "the sooner we start to look at this religion [African Traditional Religion] from the viewpoint of the traditionalist rather than the Christian, the better." (1987: 14). Yamsat raises a number of issues which, we contend, support the need for, and validity of, the approach which we have taken in our own research on Corinth. Firstly, says Yamsat, the traditionalist views the High God as the only creator, sustainer and protector of humanity, but this belief also encompasses the existence of other spiritual beings which owe their existence to God and are therefore responsible to God. The dead are considered to be part and parcel of the community such that "at worship one joins the company of the living, the dead and all creation in adoration or petition to God." (1987:22). Ancestors *are* consulted in family, clan or tribal matters, but God is central in this summoning, so that "this makes it difficult for an observer to know when the traditionalist is praying to ancestors or good spirits that exist for the good of man and when they are simply summoning them to join the living in worship to God." (1987: 22). In seeking healing, moreover, the traditionalist calls upon God, the ancestors, all well-meaning spirits and indeed the entire creation, for all have been assigned responsibility by God for the well-being of humanity. Secondly, argues Yamsat, and this has already emerged from his first point, this sort of traditional religion is in fundamental contrast to Judaeo-Christian religion in that it is profoundly inclusivist in terms of the broad range of acceptable spiritual beings which it incorporates. The exclusivist and separatist nature of the Judaeo-Christian position explains a substantial part of Paul's difficulty in dealing with the issue of sacrificial food in pluralistic Corinth. Thirdly, and not surprisingly, Yamsat underlines the fact that the world of the traditionalist is basically indivisible. African traditional religion permeates every department of the lives of its adherents, such that there is no division between the spiritual and the material, the sacred and the secular.

We have argued that all of the elements mentioned above were, to varying degrees, component parts in the complex matrix of sacrificial food ritual. The essential problem is timeless, though it manifested itself at a particular time - the mid first century C.E. - and in a particular place - Corinth - in ways which we have sought, with the available but imperfect evidence, to reconstruct and evaluate. Such were the ambiguities, boundary problems and conceptual variations surrounding the perceived nature and functions of images, sacrifices and communal meals, that absolute answers to the question of Christian

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<sup>10</sup> P. Yamsat *The Need for a Genuine Understanding of African Traditional Religion Among Christians*. Published by the Theological College of Northern Nigeria. Research Bulletin No.18 (1987) pp.14-32.

involvement in cult were rendered impossible. We believe that the vast range of feasible and valid individual interpretations extended well beyond the simplified concept of two factions called the weak and the 'strong'. With a broad spectrum of opinion, 'mind-set' and starting-points within the church, compounded by Paul's outsider perspectives, a collision course was inevitable, yet in scholarship, the dominance of the Pauline perspective has been all-pervasive. A purely theological or exegetical study of 1 Cor.8-10 may well produce an apparently coherent and simple picture, allowing for some differences of opinion, but that is basically because the perspective being taken is implicitly or explicitly that of Paul the missionary, the apostle to the Gentiles. Once the Corinthian perspectives are brought in, then many more questions are thrown up and the sheer complexity of the sacrificial food issue begins to emerge. Indeed the issue extends far beyond that of portions of food consumed at a feast, for it involves the whole dimension of personal freedom. Fee concludes his commentary on 8:1 - 11:1 (1987: 491) with the astute observation in the context of Paul's tightrope walk between liberalism and legalism, "However, in most contemporary settings the 'offended' are not unbelievers or new Christians, but those who tend to confuse their own regulations with the eternal will of God."

The issue at Corinth was not merely about the consumption of a portion of food. It was about the defining of negotiables and non-negotiables and about the demarcation of boundary lines. In short it was about the nature of a phenomenon new to both Paul *and* the Corinthians, and which we now call "Christianity", and about how the beliefs and practices of that system ought to be defined and delimited in the complex cultural matrix called 'Corinth'. Paul lived in that complexity for 18 months and moved on to fresh pastures, leaving the Corinthian believers to solve the unsolvable. The picture, painted by some scholars, of the Corinthians as deviant and struggling sinners, requires considerable revision. The sacrificial food issue was not only a genuine problem for the Corinthian Christians. It was also Paul's own personal, heart-searching struggle and dilemma as a cross-cultural missionary. That struggle for other missionaries will continue into the 21st century. When this author began his research into perspectives, he was personally warned by Rev. Dr. P. Yamsat that if he ventured into a consideration of the *insider* viewpoints on sacrificial food, then he "would not believe just how complicated the whole issue could become." In 1988, the Head of Synod of the Torajanese Church claimed that if missionaries were living in Toraja in 50 years' time, then they would find a church *still* struggling with the issue of sacrificial food. This research exercise was never intended or expected to *solve* the Corinthian problem of sacrificial food. What it has done is to expose and dissect its underlying dynamic, to shed new light on the text of 1 Cor.8-10, and to open the way for understanding and for further dialogue. If the dilemma of *eidolothuta* stretched the mind and heart of Paul, then it has done no less for this missionary too.

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