BUILT DIFFERENT

LESSON TWELVE

COMMENTARY

COMMENTARY NOTES

1 CORINTHIANS 11:2–16

Thomas Schreiner, in the *Tyndale New Testament Commentary*, labors to help us understand Paul's meaning of head coverings and how it may apply to us today:

2. Paul begins by praising the Corinthians for remembering him and for retaining the traditions which he passed on to them. The introduction represents *captatio benevolentiae* which was a typical way of gaining the goodwill of hearers or readers in the Graeco-Roman world. Thus, the word *everything* is clearly hyperbolic, particularly because Paul specifically says he cannot praise them when it comes to their behaviour at the Lord's Supper (11:17, 22). The *traditions* represent the doctrine and behaviour taught to believers when Paul visited them (cf. 1 Cor. 4:17; 15:1–4; 2 Thess. 2:15; 3:6). What is the function of the verse in the present context? Paul could be saying that he is generally pleased with them, but then turns to their defection regarding the adornment of women. This solution is not convincing, since in the next paragraph Paul specifically says that he is not pleased with the Corinthians regarding the Lord's Supper (11:17, 22), while here he says the opposite. It seems, then, that the Corinthians as a whole followed Paul's instructions on head-coverings. Probably there was a minority which contested what Paul said, and their dissent raised questions for everyone. Therefore, Paul had to make his case afresh to shore up dissent.

3. Paul addresses a matter of cultural importance regarding the adornment of women, and it relates particularly to issues of honour and shame which played a significant role in the Graeco-Roman world. The text before us is especially difficult because cultural practices and theological matters collide. Furthermore, the cultural issues broached regarding women also play a significant role in our cultural moment given the new-found freedom and liberation of women in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries; thus more detailed discussion is warranted here.

Verse 3 functions as the theological basis for the ensuing discussion, though the meaning of the verse is sharply contested. The introductory words signify that what follows represents important information for the readers (cf. Rom. 1:13; 11:25; 16:19; 1 Cor. 10:1; 12:1; Col. 2:1). We have a threefold description and order here: (1) Christ is the head of man; (2) man is the head of woman; and (3) God is the head of Christ. The meaning of the verse particularly turns on the meaning of the word *head* (*kephale*), and scholars have debated keenly about the appropriate translation. Some have argued that head signifies 'authority', so that it signifies the authority of men relative to women. Others have defended the meaning 'source'; thus Paul teaches that Adam is the source and origin of Eve. Still others have argued that the word refers to one who is 'pre-eminent' or 'foremost', and most who support this reading see the cultural prominence of the man over the woman.

All of these readings are possible both in New Testament texts and in non-biblical Greek texts, but the notion of authority is the most likely contextually. In some instances, the word *kephale* may mean 'source' (e.g. Eph. 4:15; Col. 2:19), but in other instances in Paul the word 'authority' fits the context better (cf. Eph. 1:22; 5:23; Col. 1:18; 2:10). The most important evidence here is the parallel in Ephesians 5:23 where Paul also discusses the relationship of men and women, though in this instance the focus is on husbands and wives. Wives are called upon to submit to their husbands since husbands are head (Eph. 5:22–23). The word 'head' here clearly designates authority, for contextually the notion of authority fits with the call for wives to submit. Furthermore, husbands are not the physical source of their wives, for, as Paul teaches in 1 Corinthians 11:11–12, all men come from women. Nor are husbands the spiritual source of their wives, since that honour goes to Jesus Christ.

More promising is the notion that men are socially pre-eminent or foremost in their relationship to women. David Garland understands the word 'head' in terms of representation. Such an idea makes sense, but it is harder to see how the idea of representation is derived from words like 'pre-eminent' or 'foremost'. Even if 'representation' were a satisfactory gloss for 'head' (though the evidence for such is lacking), we need to see more clearly how man represents woman and what it means in the context of 11:2–16 to say that the man represents the woman.

COMMENTARY NOTES

Further consideration of the renderings 'pre-eminent' or 'foremost' should be considered. It is doubtful that Paul thinks of men as pre-eminent physically, intellectually or emotionally. Others say that it means pre-eminent socially, but such a reading fails to persuade. Roy Ciampa and Brian Rosner rightly remark,

> Even if by 'head' Paul means 'more prominent/preeminent partner' or (less likely) 'one through whom the other exists', his language and the flow of the argument seem to reflect an assumed hierarchy … In this context the word almost certainly refers to one with authority over the other.

Others claim that there is no notion of authority here but that Paul focuses on social relations. Admittedly, this is a difficult passage, and there are certainly social and cultural dimensions in the text. For instance, honour and shame play a crucial role, and Paul is concerned that women do not bring shame on men. Still, the attempt to limit the text to social realities may blind us to the theological dimension of the text. We could fall into the trap of separating the social and theological dimensions of the discussion too sharply from one another. Actually, social and theological realities converge on one another here in remarkable ways.

The fundamental problem with an exclusively social reading is that it does not account well for the flow of thought in verse 3. An exclusively social reading of the text brackets out the theological dimension of the text, but the light of theology is not so easily extinguished. Verse 3 concludes with the claim that God is the head of Christ. I will discuss in more detail below what Paul means by such a statement. What is crucial to observe here is that such a statement does not merely designate social relations between God and Christ. Some might see a reference to the ontological Trinity while others think it refers to the economic Trinity, but in either case the assertion is deeply theological. What Paul says about God's relationship to Christ in verse 3 shows that the cultural and social dimensions of the passage cannot be sundered from theology. God's relationship to Christ is not merely social, nor is it only cultural. Paul wants his readers to see the relationship between men and women as analogous in some sense to God's relationship to Christ.

An appeal to the creation narrative indicates that Paul's discussion is not merely social or cultural but is also theological. Paul spies in the creation account a difference between men and women that should manifest itself in the cultural situation in Corinth. Women dishonour their head if they prophesy without proper adornment (11:4–6). Women who are not properly adorned flout the leadership of the church. Such a reading coheres with 1 Corinthians 14:33b–36 where the behaviour of women in the assembly is indicted because their actions betray a lack of submission to their husbands. To sum up, even if *kephale* means pre-eminent or foremost, the idea of hierarchy is present if we ask in what sense men are pre-eminent or foremost. Paul is not just saying that men are pre-eminent over women in cultural or social terms, just as he is not saying that God is merely the social head of Christ.

Another question relates to whether Paul addresses men and women or husbands and wives. The ESV sees a reference to husbands and wives in 1 Corinthians 11:3, whereas the NIV uses the language of men and women. Bruce Winter argues that the very subject addressed, the wearing of veils, indicates that wives are the referent. Other arguments in favour of this reading can also be adduced. It seems to make more sense to say that the husband is the head of his wife than to say that men are the head of women (11:3), for we do not read elsewhere that men in general are the head of women, but husbands do function as the heads of their wives (Eph. 5:22–24). Furthermore, it is difficult to see how a woman being uncovered dishonours every man in the congregation (11:5), but we can see how it would dishonour her husband as her head. Also, claiming that women in general are 'the glory of' men (11:7) introduces a thought that is not found elsewhere in Paul.

Good arguments, however, can also be presented for seeing a reference to women in general. As David Garland points out, women who were not married could also pray and prophesy, and thus we should not restrict what Paul says to married women. In other words, do the instructions about veiling apply exclusively to those who are married? It seems odd to envision single women or widows

praying or prophesying in the assembly without wearing a head-covering (11:5) while those who were married were required to wear a veil of some kind. It is possible, however, as Winter argues, that married women appeared in public with a head-covering while unmarried females did not. The comment about wearing veils 'because of the angels' (11:10) also applies more convincingly to women in general and not just wives. Why would the angels be concerned that only married women wear veils while praying or prophesying, especially when the issue is behaviour at public worship?

Paul's reflections also suggest that he casts the net more widely than marriage, for he reflects on the creation account in which Eve came from Adam. One might say, 'Well, Adam and Eve were married.' But then Paul proceeds to say that all men come from women, which moves outside the bounds of marriage (11:12). Paul probably does allude to marriage in verse 11, but he also moves outside the orbit of marriage in his discussion (11:12). The argument from nature (11:13–15) also supports the notion that Paul does not confine himself to marriage. If nature teaches women to wear long hair, this observation is not limited to married women.

It should also be noted that when Paul addresses husbands and wives exclusively, there are clear indications in the text of a married relationship (see 1 Cor. 7:2–5, 8–16; Eph. 5:22–23; Col. 3:18–19; cf. 1 Pet. 3:1–7). Still, some of the evidence for seeing wives in 1 Corinthians 11:2–16 is quite strong. I suggest, therefore, a mediating solution. Paul's instructions in this text are for both married and unmarried women in the congregation. Nevertheless, there is a fluidity and a looseness in his discussion; thus, even though Paul refers to women in general, he glides over to the relationship between husbands and wives, especially in 11:4–5. Such a move is not surprising since most of the women were probably married. Indeed, the corresponding discussion in 1 Corinthians 14:33b–36 may suggest that wives in particular were the offenders in this case. When we think about 11:3 in particular, Paul does not restrict himself exclusively to husbands and wives. It does not follow from this that every man is the head of every woman in the congregation. Instead, Paul thinks more generally and cosmically—we could say ecclesiologically—in the passage; thus in verse 3 he reflects on the creational differences between men and women. Paul's instructions, then, naturally apply in a specific way to the marriage relationship, but his main concern in this text is not marriage but the adornment of women in the corporate assembly. Hence, he naturally thinks of the relationship between men and women in general, not just wives and husbands.

How should we understand the relationship between the Father and the Son in verse 3? Is the authority functional (having to do with role) or ontological (having to do with being or essence)? Or is there a middle way between these two options? If we examine the text closely, we see that the word *Christ* is used. The reference to the Messiah points to Jesus' earthly ministry, to the incarnation, and not to his eternal sonship as the second person of the Trinity.

It is possible, of course, that the title Messiah is used and yet we still have a reference to the Logos, the eternal Son of God. After all, the doctrine of the Trinity teaches that the Son of God assumed humanity, and it is the person of the Son who acts in both his human and his divine nature. Still, the reference to Christ in 1 Corinthians 11:3 suggests that the emphasis is on the Christ's work as a human, so that the focus is on his redemptive work instead of on the inner life of the Trinity. On the other hand, what we see in the economic Trinity reflects what is true of the persons of the Trinity in their personal relations to one another. The Father is always the Father, the Son is always the Son and the Spirit is always the Spirit. The Father sends, the Son willingly goes and the Spirit proceeds from both the Father and the Son. Of course, these matters were worked out in later church history, and Paul himself does not articulate such views in their fullness. What we have in Paul and other New Testament writers constitutes the raw materials from which such doctrines were forged.

If the verse constructs a parallel between God's relation to Christ and the relationship of men to women, how should we formulate what is being said with respect to the relationship between men and women? The headship of the Father over the Son (the functional submission of the Son) grounds the relationship between men and women. Some have used the term 'subordination' here, which is not helpful since it recalls ancient heresies in which the Son was deemed to be of lesser worth or dignity than the Father. The scriptural and confessional testimony is that the Son is of the

same nature with the Father and co-equal with him, and that the Father does not have any attribute which is not fully shared by the Son and the Spirit. Hence, it is probably better not to use the word 'subordination' since it is liable to be misunderstood.

We have an analogy between the Trinity and male—female relationships, but not an exact parallel. We are not surprised to discover that there is discontinuity because the relationship of the incarnate Son (the second person of the Trinity) to his Father cannot be completely analogous to any human relationship, given the uniqueness of the relationship between the Father and the Son. Still, an analogy is drawn. Jesus is the God-Man, and as the eternal Son of God he shares every attribute that belongs to the Father. Yet, as the eternal Son, he voluntarily and gladly submits to the Father. So, too, the different role for women in the church does not call into question the essential dignity, value and worth of women, just as Christ's functional submission does not contradict his essential unity with the Father.

Paul begins the discussion, then, with a theological basis, noting the relationships between man and woman, Christ and man, and Christ and God.

4. Paul applies what he has written to the cultural issue of veils. He begins by addressing men. If a man prays or prophesies in the assembly, that is, during a worship gathering, and he has a toga on his head, he *dishonours his head*. The *head* he dishonours, we can conclude from verse 3, is Christ, and such dishonour would speak volumes in an honour—shame culture. The term *head* may also refer to oneself (cf. 2 Sam. 1:16; Ezek. 18:13; 33:4; Acts 18:6; Rom. 12:20) so that Paul uses it with a twofold referent in mind. A man who prays with a covering dishonours both Christ and himself, but the focus is on dishonouring Christ. Paul almost certainly refers to a head-covering since he uses the phrase *kata kephales*. The same phrase is also used in Esther 6:12, where it refers to a covering on Haman's head. The NIV translation renders Esther 6:12, 'Afterwards Mordecai returned to the king's gate. But Haman rushed home, with his head covered in grief' (Esth. 6:12). In this text Paul is not concerned that men were actually wearing head-coverings during worship; he simply argues that for men to do so is wrong, probably because such head-coverings were common for men in pagan worship, and perhaps because only men who were socially elite wore a toga; thus wearing a toga would mean that they were flaunting their social status.

5. Even though men are addressed first, the central concern in this text is the behaviour of women. Perhaps some women felt that they were liberated from social and cultural limitations because of the equality of men and women in Christ proclaimed by Paul (Gal. 3:28). The matter addressed here pertains to the public gathering of the church since Paul refers to women praying or prophesying, which are activities that would take place when the church was gathered. Some scholars, seeing a contrast with 14:33b–36, think that private home meetings are under consideration in 11:2–16 and formal church assemblies in 14:33b–36. We have no evidence, however, of separate private meetings, especially since the church typically gathered for its meetings in homes. There is no basis, then, for distinguishing the gathering here from what we find in 14:33b–36. Paul assumes that women will pray and prophesy when the church gathers (cf. Acts 21:9). If, however, a woman prays or prophesies with her *head uncovered*, she brings shame on her head. The shame and dishonour are such that she might as well shave her head if she is not going to wear a covering. Paul probably thinks especially of wives and husbands, though, as was argued above, the admonitions here include men and women generally. A woman praying or prophesying without a veil or covering of some kind dishonours her husband. Furthermore, the word *head*, as we saw in verse 4, probably includes the woman herself as well.

Scholars debate whether there was actually a covering. Many maintain that women did not wear a head-covering or a veil. Instead, the issue addressed is the hairstyle of women. In the cultural setting of the first century, it is claimed, letting your hair fall loose on your shoulders was the behaviour of a prostitute. For instance, in Numbers 5:18 the woman suspected of adultery who undergoes the jealousy rite is 'to let down her hair' (*apokalypsei ten kephalen tes gynaikos*). The same Greek word that describes the practice of the Corinthian women in 11:5 (*akatakalyptos*) is used in Leviticus 13:45 (lxx) about a leper's hair, which is to hang unbound. The problem with the Corinthian women, then,

could be that they were wearing their hair loose and flowing down their backs. One of the strongest arguments for this reading is verse 15 where we read that 'long hair is given to her as a covering'. The preposition *anti* (translated 'as') here often denotes substitution; thus we could translate the verse, 'long hair is given to her *in place of* a covering'. It is argued that Paul could not have in mind a covering since long hair is given instead of a covering.

Despite the strong arguments which can be adduced for seeing a reference to hairstyle instead of to a covering, it is likely that Paul refers to a covering or veil of some kind, for the following reasons. First, Paul describes Roman customs here, and a covering fits evidence from statues, grave reliefs and coins. Second, the verb translated as 'cover' (*katakalypto*) occurs three times in verses 6–7, and related cognate words occur in verses 5 and 13. These words most often refer to a covering of some kind. For example, the angels who saw the glory of Yahweh in the temple covered their faces (Isa. 6:2). Judah thought Tamar, his daughter-in-law, was a harlot because she covered her face (Gen. 38:15).

Third, Philo uses the same words Paul does in 1 Corinthians 11:5, *head uncovered* (*akatakalypto te kephale*), and it is clear that Philo speaks of a head-covering being removed because the priest had just removed her headdress (Spec. Laws, 3.60 and 3.56; cf. also Alleg. Interp. 2.29). Indeed, it is simply a negative adjective based on the verb katakalyptō, which commonly means 'cover' or 'veil'.

Fourth, as noted above, Esther 6:12 (lxx) employs the same expression found in verse 4, *kata kephales* of Haman, who hurried home mourning, covering his head in shame. He probably used part of his garment to do this. Fifth, there are a number of portraits which show women with their heads covered. Plutarch wrote, 'it is more usual for women to go forth in public with their heads covered and men with their heads uncovered' (*Quaest. rom.* 267A).

As mentioned above, verse 15 creates a difficulty since Paul says 'long hair is given to her as a covering'. The word 'as' (anti) in verse 15 often denotes substitution, but in this instance it probably indicates equivalence instead of substitution. In other words, Paul is not saying that a woman has been given long hair instead of a covering. If Paul links together hair and a covering here, his point may be that a woman's long hair is an indication that she needs to wear something that will keep her hair up on her head.

To sum up: the custom recommended here probably denotes a veil or a covering of some kind. For a woman not to wear such a covering in public in the first century may have had sexual connotations, suggesting the woman was sexually available. For instance, Lucius says in the work by Apuleius about the hair of women, 'my exclusive concern has always been with a person's head and hair, to examine it intently first in public and enjoy it later at home' (*Metam*. 2:8), and the context makes it clear that there are sexual connotations here (*Metam*. 2:8–9). In any case, the main point of the text is clear: women are to adorn themselves in a certain way.

6. Paul elaborates on the shamefulness of women not being covered. If a woman is not covered, she should *have her hair cut off* (Acts 18:18). The shearing off of her hair was shameful (cf. T. Job 24:10; Sib. Or. 3:356–362), however, and the refusal to wear a veil fits in the same category for Paul. In other words, shearing off or shaving one's hair is a *disgrace* (*aischron*), and no respectable woman would do it. In the same way, women ought to cover their heads and avoid shaming their husbands and themselves. Refusing to cover their heads sent a message in the culture of the day that the women were not relating properly to male leadership, and Paul wants them to avoid offending others.

7. Further reasons are given as to why a woman should wear a veil or covering. We see again that the cultural practice has a theological foundation. Men should not wear a veil or covering since they are *the image and glory of God.* The word *ought* (*opheilei*) signifies necessity and obligation and points to what is fitting as well. In saying that men are made in the image of God, Paul alludes to Genesis 1:26–27. Being created in God's image sets human beings apart from the rest of creation (cf. Gen. 5:3; 9:6; Jas 3:9; so also Wis. 2:23; Sir. 17:3) and is tied especially to the rule of human beings over

the created world such that men and women rule as God's vice-regents. Not only are men created in God's image, but they also bring *glory to God*. The word *glory* (*doxa*), particularly in a context where honour and shame play a significant role, points to the honour and praise that God should derive from men.

Women, on the other hand, are the *glory of* men. The honour—shame context is again decisive: women are to bring honour to men, and husbands are probably especially in mind. In particular, honour is given when head-coverings are worn during worship. Some read the text to say that women are not the image and glory of God in the same way as men are, since men are said to be the image and glory of God and the same is not said of women. It is possible that Paul emphasizes a particular way in which man is the image and glory of God, a way which differs from that of women. If this is the case, the distinctiveness of men over against women is elucidated. The problem with such an interpretation is its speculative nature, for the argument is so abbreviated that it is unclear how men are the image and glory of God over against women. In any case, it is an argument from silence, since Scripture affirms that both men and women are created in God's image (Gen. 1:26–27). Paul does not deny, then, that women are the image and glory of God, but he concentrates on their distinctive role in bringing glory and honour to their husbands. He attends to this truth because the women are to honour men particularly by wearing appropriate adornment.

8. The distinction between men and women, which means that women should be veiled during worship, is now explained further. Woman is the glory of man because the first man did not come from a woman, but the first woman came from man. Paul clearly harks back to the story of the creation of woman from the rib of the man in Genesis 2:21–23. The woman coming from the man does not signal the superiority of man, as if he has more dignity and value than woman. Paul does not endorse the notion that women are ontologically inferior. At the same time, he sees in the created order a different role and function for women, and the differences accord with the notion that the man is the head of the woman (11:3). Women, particularly wives with respect to their husbands, are to bring honour and glory to men. Their particular calling reaches back to God's purposes in creation.

9. Paul elaborates on the argument of verse 8, harking back again to the creation story. Man was not created 'for the sake of [*dia*] woman, but woman for the sake of man' (CSB). Certainly Paul addresses cultural matters in these verses, but at the same time he appeals to created norms and theological principles which reveal that the discussion cannot be restricted entirely to temporary cultural practices. The wearing of veils in the culture of the first century communicated to people the nature of the relationship between men and women. The difference in function between the sexes is again rooted in creation. In saying that woman was created for man's sake, Paul draws again on the creation account in Genesis 2, particularly the texts which speak of woman being created as a 'helper' for man (Gen. 2:18, 20). The meaning of 'helper' in Genesis, of course, is also debated intensely, but the Pauline use here accords with its meaning in Genesis 2. Women were created to assist men in extending God's rule over the world. Their particular calling of bringing glory to man finds its roots in creation itself.

10. As with so many verses in this text, the meaning of verse 10 is the subject of controversy. Especially difficult is the reference to angels. The most important clue for interpreting the meaning of the verse is the structure. The words *for this reason* (*dia touto*) link verse 10 with verses 8–9, showing that verses 8–9 are the grounds for what is said in verse 10. We can portray the structure as follows:

1. Men should not wear head-coverings (11:7).
2. Support for the command: the order of creation (11:8–9).
3. Therefore, women should wear head-coverings (11:10).

Many interpreters, on the other hand, understand the verse in a profoundly different way. They argue that the word *authority* (*exousia*) is always active; thus Paul does not speak of a woman's submission to authority, but the authority women have to prophesy.

Such a view, though attractive and possible, is not convincing, for the following reasons. First, as was pointed out above, the structure of the text is such that verses 7 and 10 are parallel. A man should not wear a head-covering (11:7), but a woman should (11:10). Second, the active reading focuses on the authority or right—namely, the freedom of a woman to prophesy; but the focus of the verse is not on freedom. Instead, the text says 'the woman ought [*opheilei*] to have authority on her head'. The word 'ought' (cf. Rom. 13:8; 15:1, 27; 1 Cor. 7:36; 11:7; 2 Cor. 12:11, 14) suggests that a command is given here as to how women should adorn themselves when they prophesy (cf. 11:5); it communicates an obligation, not freedom.

Third, the qualification given in verse 11 (see below) fits best with a command for women to have a covering as a symbol of submission to men. Verse 11 begins with the word 'nevertheless' (*plen*). In verses 11–12 Paul guards against the misunderstanding that women are somehow inferior to men, but the qualification would be superfluous if he had just affirmed women's authority and right to prophesy in such strong terms in verse 10.

Fourth, it is not strained to see *exousia* in verse 10 as 'sign of authority' or 'symbol of authority' (NRSV, ESV, NASB, NET, CSB). One can see why something worn on the head could function as a sign or symbol of something. The dragon, in Revelation 12:3, has seven heads on which are seven crowns. The crowns symbolize the dragon's authority and power. In the vision of Jesus' return on a white horse (Rev. 19:12), 'on his head are many crowns', symbolizing his kingly authority. Diodorus Siculus (c. 60–30 bc) refers to a stone statue that has 'three kingdoms on its head [*echonton treis basileias epi tes kephales*]' (1.47.5), which means in the context that the statue has three crowns, which are symbols of governing kingdoms. Something on the head, then, may be a symbol of something else. The text describes a statue of the mother of King Osymandias and reads as follows: 'There is also another statue of his mother standing alone, a monolith twenty cubits high, and it has three kingdoms on its head, signifying that she was both daughter and wife and mother of a king' (1.47.5). Here the three crowns (which Diodorus calls kingdoms) all represent someone else's authority—the authority of the woman's father (who was a king), husband (who was a king) and son (who was a king). The woman's own authority is not symbolized by the crowns she wears. Similarly, the head-covering of the woman in 1 Corinthians 11 may represent the authority of man.

In verse 10 Paul gives a new reason for wearing the coverings: *because of the angels*. The meaning of the saying is controversial and difficult. Space is lacking to include all the interpretations here. Some think the angels refers to human messengers, so it is suggested that Paul speaks of messengers from other churches who would be shocked at what was happening in Corinth. Another suggestion is that a prophetic revelation about what is fitting has been mediated through angels. Others have suggested that the covering is necessary since angels would lust over women at worship. The best solution is probably that the angels are good angels who assist in worship and desire to see the order of creation maintained.

11–12. The argument is now qualified to avoid a possible misunderstanding, and the qualification is signalled with the word *Nevertheless* (*plen*). One might think from the headship of the man (v. 3), the necessity for women to wear veils (vv. 5–6, 10), woman being man's glory (v. 7), the origin of the woman from the man (v. 8) and the creation of woman for man's sake that men are superior to women. Paul wants to avoid any thought that women are ontologically inferior; thus he emphasizes the interdependence of men and women in the Lord. Women came into existence through men, but men come into the world through women. The first woman was from the first man, but now all men come into the world through women, that is, through their birth via a mother. A difference in function between men and women does not negate the equality and value of the two sexes. In saying *everything comes from God*, the Lord is acknowledged as the ultimate source of life and all that is good. At the same time, there is the recognition that the diversity and unity of the sexes come from him. He has sovereignly appointed, directed and blessed both sexes.

13. The argument for covering has been theological (appealing to creation) and cultural (appealing to honour–shame). Now Paul turns to arguments from nature and good sense. He appeals to the

Corinthians themselves and asks them to assess the situation, which is quite similar to his tack in 1 Corinthians 10:15 in the discussion on food offered to idols. If they judge rightly, they will discern that it is not *proper* (*prepon*) or fitting for women to pray with uncovered heads. Elsewhere Paul appeals to what is fitting in discussing the proper behaviour of various age groups (Titus 2:1) or what it is appropriate for women to do (1 Tim. 2:10). Women should be veiled when the church is gathered, and more particularly when they pray or prophesy in the gathering (11:5). Paul expects cultural resonance and agreement with his words here, which indicates that he does not say anything that would astonish his readers.

14. In verses 14 and 15 Paul appeals to nature to make his case. The NIV's *Does not the very nature of things* is not as clear as most translations here. The NRSV is clearer and more accurate: 'Does not nature itself teach you …' What Paul means by *nature* (*physis*) needs to be investigated further. Human beings by nature are male and female; thus same-sex relations 'are contrary to nature' (Rom. 1:26, ESV). The term is also used of what is natural by creation: of branches that were naturally and from the beginning on the olive tree (Rom. 11:21, 24). Similarly, Jews are born as Jews naturally (Gal. 2:15), while Gentiles are naturally uncircumcised (Rom. 2:27) and do not have the law at birth (Rom. 2:14). By birth and nature all people are children of wrath (Eph. 2:3; cf. Wis. 13:1). Idols, by nature, are false gods (Gal. 4:8). Antiochus Epiphanes argued that the Jews should eat pork since 'nature has granted it to us' (4 Macc. 5:8, NRSV; cf. also 5:9). Nature may refer to the essence of something, to the qualities that make it what it is (Jas 3:7; 2 Pet. 1:4; Wis. 7:20; 19:20), or to natural affections, such as the love present within a family (4 Macc. 13:27; 15:13, 25; 16:3). The term can be used, then, with various nuances, and the task is to determine its sense here. It seems that the creation and culture coalesce here. The hair of men and women, generally speaking, is quite different; hence for a man to wear his hair long disgraces (*atimia*) him. What *long hair* means is not defined, but Paul probably has in mind a man wearing his hair so that he looks like a woman. Pseudo-Phocylides writes, 'If a child is a boy, do not let locks grow on his head. Do not braid his crown nor cross knots at the top of his head. Long hair is not fit for boys, but for voluptuous women' (Ps.-Phoc. 200–212). Nature functions as an instructor that teaches human beings about distinctions between men and women. The distinctions are echoed in culture; thus a man with long hair elicits repugnance and brings shame upon himself.

15. If nature teaches that it is shameful and dishonourable for a man to wear long hair, it also teaches that the long hair of a woman is her *glory*. The term *glory* (*doxa*) has already been used in this text to denote the honour a woman is intended to bring to man (1 Cor. 11:7). Honour is clearly in view here since the word *glory* functions as the antonym of the term 'disgrace' in verse 14. The long hair of a woman, then, brings her honour in that it communicates culturally the distinctions between men and women. Conversely, for a woman to have her hair sheared off or shaved would bring her shame (11:5–6). Creation and culture meet here, for the creational distinctions between men and women are reflected in a particular cultural setting.

The final comment in verse 15 is not as clear as we might wish. As noted earlier, some understand the comment to say that a woman is not required to wear a covering or veil because her hair *is given to her* 'instead of' (*anti*) *a covering*. The strength of this reading is the interpretation of anti, since the preposition usually signifies the replacement of one thing for another. The problem with this interpretation is that such a reading contradicts everything else in the passage (11:2–16). Paul clearly uses words for covering or veiling in verses 4–7, so it would make little sense if he were to conclude that a woman's long hair suffices, such that a covering is unnecessary. If this were the only verse, the alternative interpretation would convince. But, given everything else Paul says, we can almost certainly conclude that the long hair of a woman signifies that a covering is fitting. The argument is analogous: since a woman has long hair, it is fitting for her to wear a covering.

16. The paragraph closes with a reference to those who might be *contentious*, which probably represents a minority in the church. The desire of the minority represents an innovation, and their pushing of the boundaries in this instance is not appropriate. The term we here represents Paul and perhaps even other churches. Paul is not alone on this matter, for *the churches of God* concur. The universal practice of the churches is important to Paul since he mentions it several times in 1 Corinthians (4:17; 7:17; 14:33). Freedom that departs from the tradition of the churches is not

commended by Paul but seen as a serious departure. The 'custom' (CSB) which the churches practice is certainly the veiling of women. Some scholars argue that Paul, at the conclusion of the text, teaches that neither he nor the churches follow the custom of women being veiled. Such a reading, however, is clearly mistaken and actually quite bizarre since it contradicts the teaching of the remainder of the text. It scarcely makes sense for Paul to close the discussion by saying that he does not follow the custom that he has urged so strongly upon the churches.

The theology of this paragraph is a matter of controversy today. Working out the implications of the passage is not easy since culture and theology merge. It is clear that the distinctions between the sexes must be preserved; thus there is no warrant for the notion that one's gender is simply a social construct. God designed from the beginning a beautiful complementarity between males and females. Men and women are equally made in God's image (Gen. 1:26–27); they have equal access to salvation (Gal. 3:28) and share the same destiny (1 Pet. 3:7). They have equal dignity, value and significance. At the same time, the text indicates that different roles are intended for men and women.

Men as the head exercise a loving authority (whether in the marriage or in church leadership), and the women, by veiling themselves, signified their adaptability to such leadership. Some believe that the expression of this role relationship (i.e. veiling during worship) still applies today. It is more likely, however, that the theological and the cultural impinge upon one another in this text. Seeing this text as authoritative does not demand, then, that the cultural expression of the relationship between men and women should be practised today. In many cultures today, whether women are covered or veiled during worship does not communicate anything about the relationship of men and women, though in first-century Corinth it sent a powerful message. If women did not wear the covering, they brought shame on themselves and their husbands. Each culture has to work out how the theological principle articulated works out in its particular circumstances.[1]

1 CORINTHIANS 11:17–26

William Baker, In the *Cornerstone Bible Commentary*, explains how the Corinthians are botching the gathering for the Lord's Supper by dishonoring Christ and one another:

His general estimate of the situation, conveyed in 11:17, is that the Corinthians' practices during church gatherings are damaging the faith and the development of believers rather than being uplifting. Of course, it should be the opposite. Their regular gatherings in the larger homes of believers, probably occurring at least weekly, ought to nourish the faith of all present. All should leave feeling better about their commitment to Christ and closer to others with whom they share this common bond of faith in Christ.

In 11:18, Paul indicates that his knowledge of their practices at the Lord's Supper came from sources who had reported these matters to him. Though he hated to think their observations were true, he was forced to confront the Corinthians with what he had heard. Hopefully, their intention had not been to be cruel to some in the fellowship or to be insulting to Christ. Blinded by their normal social conventions, they had just not realized the theological ramifications of what they were doing. Their very meeting together—the very few in Corinth with common loyalty to Christ—was dividing rather than uniting them.

Paul used the very same word (schism) to describe the divisions in 1:10, when he denounced the factional groups rallying around different iconic leaders. To some extent, it will be seen that his theological concern runs along the same lines: Divisions in the body of Christ (the church) divide Christ himself. Now, however, the divisions were not between the house groups but within house groups.

[1] Thomas R. Schreiner, *1 Corinthians: An Introduction and Commentary*, ed. Eckhard J. Schnabel, vol. 7, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (London: Inter-Varsity Press, 2018), 221–239.

COMMENTARY NOTES

Archaeological work in the Corinthian area in the 1970s by Wiseman (1979:528), which was authoritatively explained by Murphy-O'Connor (2002:155), has revealed the design of the houses in which the Corinthian believers likely gathered for worship during this period. Larger homes, owned by wealthier believers, including perhaps Gaius, Crispus, Stephanas, and Chloe, were built in a villa style, having two areas where guests could gather to eat a meal. One area, called the triclinium, with a floor space measuring 18 × 24 feet, had couches and a table at which nine people could eat comfortably. About 30–40 people (standing or sitting with no table) could be accommodated in the atrium, measuring 16 × 20 feet, which would also have had a water-collection pool in the middle. The significance of this is that it reveals how the Christians gathering as the church in one of these homes could have become divided physically by their structural environment.

Surprisingly, in 11:19 Paul admits that division has its purposes in God's plans. Using a different word than in 11:18, he speaks primarily in terms of God dividing humanity between those who are his people and those who are not. As Israel was necessarily separated out from the Philistines, Amorites, and others, so also the Corinthians were among those who had been separated out from idol-worshiping pagans in Corinth. This separation is never more real than when the Christians gather together for worship, leaving the pagan world outside. At the very center of this separation is the Lord's Supper, which Paul already emphasized as a separating event for Christians (comparable to Israel) when he said in 10:14–22 that when they share in it, they no longer associate with the worship of demons as their pagan neighbors do. Yet, even among those inside the Christian assembly, there were phonies to be discovered and removed—as a necessary means to reveal the true people of God who remained. Paul seemed to believe it was possible that various people's responses to his teaching on the Lord's Supper would expose their true colors. Were they truly members, or were they really outsiders who happened to be inside for the time being, only awaiting a crucial event to make this plain? Paul reveals in 11:20 that this event is the Lord's Supper. For the Corinthians, at least, it was their test. According to Paul, they may have called what they were doing the Lord's Supper, but it really wasn't. They may have been eating the bread and drinking the wine, but the way they were doing it was voiding any true, spiritual effect connected with Christ. What they were doing was too much like any other pagan social gathering. As 11:21 elaborates, their gatherings had turned into segregated social clubs, with the wealthy on the inner circle and everyone else outside.

Most likely social elites were gathering in the spacious triclinium with the host; everyone else, like day laborers, slaves, and such, were out in the atrium (Blue 1991:233). Furthermore, in accordance with the social norm (Corry 1999:188–189), the elite eating in the triclinium were consuming much finer food and drink than those in the atrium (Thiselton 2000:861; Witherington 1995:249). It is possible that the wealthy, having more control over their schedule, were arriving early, while working people could not arrive until later (Collins 1999:422–423; Fee 1987:542; Theissen 1982:151–153). However, other commentators caution against this interpretation (Garland 2003:541; Hofius 1993:88–96; Thiselton 2000:863; Winter 1978:81–82). The dinner may have been conducted in a potluck style in which everyone shared their food (Collins 1999:417–418), or a basket style, in which each family brought and consumed their own food (Garland 2003:539–541; Hofius 1993:92; Lampe 1994:38–39), or some combination of the two. Regardless, Paul's criticism was against the wealthy for drinking themselves into a stupor even while others had nothing to eat. Such conduct might be normal at a Greek symposium (followed by a lecture and discussion), but that is not appropriate at the Lord's Supper (Corry 1999:191; Keener 2005:97; Witherington 1995:244). Paul was criticizing their conduct at what was supposed to be a full evening meal, which would be followed by a ritual sharing of the bread and cup of Christ, with perhaps other worship activities (Blue 1991:230; Klauck 1993:65–66; Lampe 1994:37).

Paul's sarcastic question in 11:22 about the worst abusers remaining at home to eat makes it very clear that a full meal was involved at the Christian gathering. That the problem at Corinth was an issue of class and money is evident when Paul stipulates that the poor were being shamed by the conduct of the social elite (Henderson 2002:203). Paul's pragmatic suggestion is that those who intended to continue to conduct themselves in this segregated way should remain at home. The humiliation of those in the lower class could thereby be avoided. Perhaps, after the wealthy had eaten their sumptuous meal, they could bring some to share when they came at the later hour. But there is an

ironic twist here. Since they were already separating themselves from the others by their thoughtless, elitist actions, maybe it was best just to separate themselves completely and eat at home. It was not the poor, late-arrivers who were ruining this holy gathering of believers; the elite were spoiling the unity of Christ's body. One of the most unique aspects of the Christian faith to those in Corinth was its appeal to all people, regardless of class, race, or gender. Yet the Corinthian believers would not at all be accustomed to being mixed together in regular social gatherings. The poor surely would never have been in the palatial homes of the wealthy believers under any other circumstances and would have felt immensely intimidated. Those of higher class would have felt right at home but would not have felt at all comfortable mingling with the others as peers.

Given this, the environmental separation and distinction by class may have seemed perfect to make these church gatherings work. However, Paul calls this a disgrace. They were to regard one another as brothers and sisters in Christ. As family, the care, nurture, and support of one another in their common faith must be real, and it must overcome the normal social barriers erected by culture. The best place to begin is eating together in an equitable way, mixing together socially. What better way to set the proper atmosphere for sharing in the holy meal together after supper, and then sharing together in prophecy and prayer after that?

The Corinthians needed a reminder about the seriousness of what they were doing when they shared in the Lord's Supper. In 11:23–26, Paul rehearses its institution by Jesus Christ himself, to be followed by stern warnings against abusing its practice. Despite the wording that emphasizes Paul's direct knowledge of its origins, his wording need not mean that the Lord told him this personally (Fee 1987:548). It could just as well mean, and probably does, that those who were present when Jesus instituted this commemorative ritual had passed his words directly to Paul, who then passed them on in writing to the Corinthians (Farmer 1993:54). There is no doubt, though, that he initiated the practice of sharing in the Lord's Supper among the Corinthians when he was first there with them, as he must have done with other churches he established in his ministry. Paul used the same formula of "pass on" and "received" regarding his narration of resurrection accounts later in 15:3.

With the synoptic Gospels' not being written until at least a decade later (i.e., in the 60s, whereas 1 Corinthians was written in ad 55), this makes Paul's rendition of the Lord's Supper institution in 1 Corinthians the first written account. The remarkable agreement between Paul's account and those in Matthew 26:26–28, Mark 14:22–24, and Luke 22:19–20 speaks to the solid oral transmission of this singular event through the first generation of believers until it found its way into Paul's account here and into the synoptic Gospels. Comparison between the four accounts puts Paul's and Luke's in closest proximity to each other (Collins 1999:426). Distinct from Matthew and Mark, both Paul and Luke include the wording (1) "which is given for you"; (2) "do this to remember me" (Luke only for the bread); (3) "the new covenant … with my blood"; (4) mention of the cup "after supper." Common to all four accounts are (1) taking bread; (2) giving thanks; (3) breaking the bread; (4) saying, "this is my body"; and (5) the cup.

Paul connected the ritual the Corinthians were celebrating at the end of their fellowship meal with its origin as a commemorative rite Jesus began at the end of a traditional Passover meal (Thiselton 2000:872–874), though a few insist the full meal would have occurred between the bread and the cup, as in Passover (Hofius 1993:80–88). At any rate, this was Jesus' last meal with the disciples only hours before his arrest, trial, and crucifixion. Paul's depiction attempts to capture the drama of those moments in which Jesus anticipated his death—the climax of his mission—and infused it with meaning for his disciples at the table with him and for later followers like the Corinthians. As the host of the meal, Jesus had already initiated each course of the meal with expected words from Jewish tradition, but as he took up the unleavened bread, his words took an unexpected turn. The very act of breaking the bread was connected in his mind to his own body, which would soon be broken (tortured with pain and the agony of a cruel death), and thus he spoke words that identify this ultimate act of self-giving with the bread. The expression "given for you" recognizes the exchange that occurred on behalf of others—his life, the ultimate sacrifice, given to redeem people estranged from God.

COMMENTARY NOTES

No other rendition of the Lord's Supper emphasizes the remembrance command like Paul's does. Although Luke includes it after the bread, only in 1 Corinthians does Jesus state this twice, following both the bread and cup. Paul wanted the Corinthians to understand without question that their own practice of sharing in the Lord's Supper should be done to honor Christ and his wishes. It was not an optional aspect of their community gathering. Although sharing in the bread and the cup would certainly help believers recall the events of Christ's crucifixion, reenacting these institutional moments in word and action constitute the remembrance (Fee 1987:553). Thus, the sacrament is not inherent in the bread or the wine (Fee 1987:550; Thiselton 2000:876) but within the believing community's participating together in the Lord's Supper (Engberg-Pedersen 1993:117; Schottroff 2000:601; Surburg 2000:206). Thus, when 11:26 describes the community's announcement of Christ's death and his return (which also assumes his resurrection), the public celebration of the Lord's Supper itself accomplishes this (Gaventa 1983:382–383; Soards 1999:242).

Also notable in Paul's rendition of the Lord's Supper is his emphasis, like Luke, on the new covenant and Christ's blood. The "new covenant" connects to Jeremiah 31:31 and its anticipation of a climactic phase of God's plan to save all people. Jeremiah 31:31 itself connects the new covenant to the institution of the old covenant (Exod 24:8), when Moses sprinkled the blood of sacrificial bulls upon the gathered people to seal their agreement to live as God's people under his laws given to Moses. The wine in the cup connects the gathered Corinthian believers to the sacrificial blood of Christ, which Luke says was, literally, "poured out for many." Thus, Paul saw the regular participation, probably weekly (Horsley 1998:165), in the Lord's Supper as the pronouncement of God's new plan that now includes Gentiles as his covenant people. All believers in Christ constitute God's new people, who through this new ritual of the Lord's Supper identify with him and his death. They also identify with each other as bonded together because of Christ (Hays 1997:199).[2]

1 CORINTHIANS 10:27–34

In the *Pillar Bible Commentary*, Roy Ciampa expounds on Paul's showing the Corinthians the right way to celebrate the Lord's Supper:

11:27 Since the practice of the Lord's Supper entails the proclamation of the Lord's death, there are clear consequences for practicing it in a way that undermines the significance of that "self-giving death for others." *So then, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord.* Paul's introductory *So then* indicates an inference to be drawn from his prior explanation of what the Lord's Supper is all about. The reference to participating in the Lord's supper *in an unworthy manner* must be understood in light of the context, where the Corinthians were practicing the supper in a way that humiliated other members of Christ's body. To eat and drink in *an unworthy manner* is to eat and drink in a way that demeans, humiliates, or disrespects other members of Christ's community. What does Paul have in mind by *sinning against the body and blood of the Lord?* He could mean sinning against those who by their participation in Christ have come to constitute the body and blood of the Lord or he could mean that they sin against the (new) covenant which the Supper itself represents (v. 25) and reaffirms and thereby sin against the one who established that covenant and Supper and who presides as Lord of that table. Given the identification that is established between Christ and his people through their participation in his death and the other-centered focus of the new covenant Christ has established, it is probably best to understand that both ideas are in mind. To worship Christ in a way that shows disrespect toward those who are have been "united with the Lord," have become "one with him in spirit" (6:17), and who share or participate in his body and blood (10:16) is to sin not just against them but also against the covenant reaffirmed in the meal, against the Lord of the meal and of those brothers and sisters in Christ.

[2] William Baker, "1 Corinthians," in Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, vol. 15 (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2009), 168–171.

COMMENTARY NOTES

11:28–29 Verses 28–34 are tied together by their constant reference to the motif of the judgment which comes on the church for the members' failure to treat each other as is appropriate for those who constitute the body of the Lord Jesus Christ. To sin against the body and blood of the Lord (v. 27) is to sin against the new covenant established by Christ's body and blood, calls down judgment on oneself and on the community, and thus is to be avoided at all costs (vv. 28–34). Since Paul clearly believes that the Corinthians have in fact been sinning against Christ's body and blood and have brought judgment on themselves, he explains what needs to be done to correct the situation and to avoid inciting further judgment.

Paul warns that *Everyone ought to examine themselves before they eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For those who eat and drink without discerning the body of Christ eat and drink judgment on themselves.* To *examine* oneself and to *discern the body of Christ* do not merely mean, in this context, to solemnly recognize that the bread and cup represent Christ's body and blood rather than being mundane food and drink. To *examine oneself* means to examine one's compliance with the covenant as reflected in their ways of relating to other members of the community and to *discern the body of Christ* must include recognizing that those other members of the community represent Christ himself (since they have also been united with him) and must be treated as people for whom Christ chose to give up his life and to shed his blood.

Gordon Hugenburger points out that "Paul's threat that whoever eats and drinks unworthily will 'eat and drink judgment upon himself' " reflects the nature of the Lord's Supper "as a covenant-ratifying oath-sign" implying "a self-maledictory symbolism" such that "our infidelity deserves the same dreadful curse which overtook Christ, whose death is symbolized in the elements." This is consistent with Paul's depiction of the judgment that fell on Israel as a result of their infidelity to God's covenant in 10:8–10. Paul's allusion to the divine judgment that has fallen on the Corinthian community makes it clear just how seriously the Supper and its practice is to be taken.

11:30 Paul now explains what has come about due to their eating and drinking without discerning Christ, respecting his covenant and the fact that those other members are also part of Christ's body: *That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep.* This verse may be (and has been) easily twisted to suggest that were it not for sin in the community no one would get sick or die. It is not that all the sicknesses and deaths in the community are to be attributed to their sinning against Christ's body and blood, but that that is responsible for *many* of the health problems that have wracked that community. To *fall asleep* was a well-known figure for death in the Greco-Roman world. It should not be assumed that the sick or dying were particularly guilty of the sin, but, like most plagues of divine judgment in the Old Testament, the plague could fall indiscriminately on the community as a whole (e.g., Exod. 32:35; Num. 8:19; 11:33; Deut. 32:24; Josh. 22:17). Paul's teaching here is consistent with teaching about divine discipline elsewhere in that, as the following verses make clear, he clearly hopes that the church will learn from its experience and respond in a way that will not only be less prejudicial to the physical health of church members but also more likely to result in the kinds of edifying behaviors that will lead to the development of a community that truly glorifies God in all it does.

11:31 Paul explains how to avoid the judgment which the church has been experiencing due to its insensitivity to its covenant commitments, including the needs and dignity of its own members: *But if we were more discerning with regard to ourselves, we would not come under such judgment.* The word translated discerning is based on the root word judgment at the end of the verse and has to do with judging or evaluating, although it is not as strong as the latter word. The point is that something as simple as more self-evaluation, more self-examination, could help us avoid divine judgment by leading us to catch and correct ourselves before God decided to take matters into his own hands and bring about a very undesirable external motivation that might lead us to finally correct what we had consistently ignored. To worship God is also to expose oneself to the extreme danger that comes from treating what is holy as though it were profane. In our case our brothers and sisters in Christ have been sanctified (cf. on 1:2), that is, made holy in God's sight, and for us to treat them as mere objects or in ways that are not worthy of the God who has sanctified them is to invite divine wrath for

our disrespect of the God we claim to worship.

In much of the Western world today (perhaps especially in some evangelical contexts) the idea that God would judge his people in the way Paul suggests here is completely foreign, and people may be tempted to think that Paul's language reflects an antiquated and unenlightened view of God. Such an attitude reflects the extent to which the modern world has lost the biblical understanding of God's transcendence and fearsome holiness. In *The Chronicles of Narnia* C. S. Lewis emphasized the idea that Aslan was not "a tame lion," but in much evangelical culture at the beginning of the twenty-first century the Christian God is a tame God, into whose presence people feel free to enter in a trifling or frivolous manner. Paul would have us know that the way we behave in worship and the way we treat other members of God's holy people are not to be taken lightly, but require the most serious circumspection.

11:32 Even God's judgment has the good of his people in mind: *Nevertheless, when we are judged in this way by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be finally condemned with the world.* Like the previous verse, this one has two words based on the same root. The word translated *judged* is the same as "judgment" in the previous verse. The word translated *condemned* is based on that same root word but is stronger. The line of thought from the previous verse to this one is that self-examination may help us avoid (the stronger) judgment, and that judgment is intended to help us avoid (the even stronger) condemnation. The relationship between the Greek words for "judged" and "condemned" is stressed in the Greek by placing them as the first and last words of the sentence, respectively. God's judgment has a holy purpose—that of better preparing us to exist in his holy presence through a process of redemptive discipline.186 The difference between God's designs for his people and his plans for the rest of *the world* is stressed by the two alternatives of *being disciplined* or *condemned*. The world in rebellion against God is destined to be condemned by him. God's discipline is intended to spare us from that and to ensure our perseverance in our relationship with God, whose discipline reflects his fatherly commitment to his people (since *discipline* is most commonly meted out by a father to his children with the intention of developing their character and safeguarding their future). Paul's statement that God's discipline is intended to spare us from ultimate condemnation also serves as a solemn warning to the Corinthians of the danger they face if they fail to respond appropriately to that divine discipline. Implicit in the statement is the idea that condemnation is an open threat for those who continue to act in the way that has brought God's judgment on them in the first place.

11:33–34 We arrive at Paul's conclusion to his discussion of the Corinthians' problems with the Lord's Supper: *So then, my brothers and sisters, when you gather to eat, you should all eat together.* In this case Paul's *So then* does not lead to a theological conclusion, but to a very practical one. Paul's appeal to the readers as *my brothers and sisters* highlights the importance of this passage which brings the topic to its conclusion.188 The reference to gathering to eat could suggest that the church did not share the Lord's Supper whenever they gathered, but had special meetings to participate in the Lord's Supper. On the other hand, the reference to gathering to eat may simply be intended to indicate the explicit resumption of the theme of eating which was kept on the surface throughout vv. 21–29 but was not mentioned in vv. 30–32.

Some scholarly debate has focused on whether the verb and reflexive pronoun translated above as *eat together* mean "to receive each other" or "to wait for each other." The first interpretation would suggest that the emphasis is on the need for the Corinthians to accept each other and treat each other not only with due respect and courtesy, but also with true care and affection. This certainly fits with Paul's teaching and emphasis throughout this section. Unfortunately, the verb used does not seem to be used with the sense of receiving another person with hospitality but when it has to do with "receiving" is a matter of receiving something from someone. When used with a person as an object, it usually means "to remain in a place or state and await an event or the arrival of someone" and calls for a translation such as "expect" or "wait" (BDAG; Thiselton, 899). This fits with our interpretation of v. 21, which rebukes the Corinthians for not waiting for each other but going ahead and eating their meal before less privileged members of the community have arrived. In fact, Schrage

(finding a temporal element to the key verbs in each verse) has suggested that this verse forms an inclusio with v. 21. It seems that v. 21 refers to the precise practical offense while v. 33 provides the precise practical correction to that offense. The translation adopted by the TNIV, *you should all eat together*, fits perfectly with the interpretation defended here (especially thanks to the all): Paul's exhortation to "wait for each other" is intended to guarantee that any eating that is done is enjoyed by the whole community together rather than by certain parts of the community who are insensitive to the rest.

Every Christian community needs to think very carefully about its worship practices and whether or not they are being carried out in ways that disadvantage or show insensitivity to any of its members. Subgroups (potential cliques) within the church also need to be alert to whether or not the fellowship they enjoy with each other sends a message of exclusiveness which is inconsistent with the reality of the oneness of Christ's body. The previous and following verses stress how serious the danger may be when such sensitivity is lacking.

11:34 Since the members of the community should wait for each other so that they can eat together, *Those who are hungry should eat something at home.* By having something to eat before the meeting they will not be tempted to go ahead and start the meeting early (before all have arrived) in order to assuage their hunger. The idea is not that they would not eat anything at the church meeting, but that their participation in the meal which included the Lord's Supper would be focused on the significance of the meal itself and the fellowship with other members of the community and not on satisfying one's own natural hunger. It is just possible to take Paul's words to say "If someone is hungry let them eat in the house," with the point being that as part of one's Christian love for others the host of the church gathering (the person in whose house the church would be meeting) must make sure that no one goes away hungry and that if the food is being served in the house (more specifically in the triclinium?) anyone who is hungry would have access to it, and not merely those who share the social status of the host or special favor with them. This is unlikely, however, since the expression used means "at home" (cf. BDAG), and it is clearly used that way in 14:35. Of course generous hospitality is a Christian virtue, and the person hosting the church gathering would presumably be providing some food for all those gathered, but they would be better able to serve the whole community if those who gathered were not famished when they came and were not looking forward to the food more than they were to fellowship with the community as a whole.

The precaution of eating at home (before the church gathering) if one is hungry is to be taken *so that when you meet together it may not result in judgment*. Divine judgment would be incurred if, out of concern for their own felt needs, people continued to display a lack of consideration for others and attended to their own desires and pleasures rather than the well-being of others, especially those who may have greater needs than their own.

And when I come I will give further directions. We obviously do not know what further directions Paul had in mind or why he did not share them in the letter. Perhaps he had some specific instructions about a more effective way of sharing the Lord's Supper that would have been too complicated to write out in a letter, or he had some words of direction or correction to share with some particular members of the church which would have been tactless to include here. It is also possible that Paul recognizes that he does not have a full picture of exactly what was going on (and had not heard both sides or every side of this issue) and decided that some conclusions could be drawn (and guidance given) only after arriving and seeing what was going on for himself. Since the further directions could evidently wait until he arrived in Corinth, they were presumably of lesser urgency than the guidance he provided in the letter. The fact that he was anticipating another visit to Corinth and yet sent this letter ahead of time suggests that what Paul did include in this letter addressed issues he considered rather urgent. In this particular passage it is clear that he is dealing with a matter of life and death and which needed to be dealt with immediately for the sake of the spiritual, social, and physical health of the congregation.[3]

[3] Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), 554–560.

COMMENTARY NOTES

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Mark A. Taylor, *1 Corinthians*, New American Commentary
Gordon Fee, *1 Corinthians*, New International Commentary of the New Testament (NICNT)
Anthony Thiselton, *1 Corinthians*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (NIGTC)
Leon Morris, *1 Corinthians*, Tyndale New Testament Commentary
Alan F. Johnson, *1 Corinthians*, IVP New Testament Commentary
David Prior, *The Message of 1 Corinthians*, The Bible Speaks Today
William Baker, *1 Corinthians*, Cornerstone Bible Commentary
Paul Ellingwroth and Howard A. Hatton, *A Handbook on 1 Corinthians*, UBSH