KOINONIA IN 1 CORINTHIANS 10:16 *

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ABSTRACT

The article traces the grammatical analysis of the word koinonia within the context of the Greek text. The term is compared with cognates like koinonoi in order to portray Paul’s line of thought, and contrasted with synonyms like metechein in order to expose koinonia’s unique contribution to Paul’s idea of the eschatological community conjured up by the breaking of bread. The latter conclusion is arrived at by a further contrast between Paul’s use of koinonia Christou in conjunction with soma Christou on the one hand, as against koinonia estin of the Synoptics, on the other.

1 INTRODUCTORY OVERVIEW

Much has been written about the term κοινωνία and cognates. What seems apparent is that in the New Testament, κοινωνία is specifically a Pauline concept (Bauer 1958). Secondly, its occurrence in 1 Corinthians 10:16 appears to represent one of its most basic usages, if only by virtue of the data available in the immediate context of this verse. Regarding what the term κοινωνία actually means, has also been the subject of a protracted debate which assumed a serious turn during the last 50 years, that is, from Groenewald (1932) to Hainz (1982). Although commentators seem divided as to whether κοινωνία means participating in something or sharing (Anteilhaben) on the one hand, or community, close union (Gemeinschaft) on the other, it would appear that in the end, these meanings emerge as the two poles in which the latter, that is communion, is the result of the former, that is participation. This means that emphasis may fall on either of the two poles in any instance. Nor do commentators always agree on the categories of meaning and the texts assigned to these categories. For example Bauer (1958) has the following categories of meaning for κοινωνία: Gemeinschaft, Mittelsamkeit, Erweis brüderlichen Zusammenhaltens and Anteilhaben. Note that here Gemeinschaft enjoys overwhelming preponderance. Seesemann (1933) has only three categories of meaning: Mitteilsamkeit, Anteilhaben and Gemeinschaft. Even here Anteilhaben enjoys preponderance. This could suggest that the concept Gemeinschaft is more basic. The term communion seems to approximate both participation in something, for example Christ, and the bond between the participants. This means that, in the final analysis, the idea of participation and that of the subsequent fellowship of the participants are inseparable. This would be the position of Holsten (1880-1998) - with
1.1 The meaning of koinonia
In the circumstances it is our submission that only if we accept the premise that the one meaning, for example Anteilhaben presupposes the other, for example Gemeinschaft, are we able to decipher with a reasonable degree of certainty why Paul chose this term. The foregoing contention must be weighed vis-à-vis the specific pastoral circumstances which determined his propriety of diction. This is even more so considering that there are Greek words (whether in this text or not) which can convey a simple meaning of partaking or sharing (e.g. μετέχειν) or friend (e.g. φίλος) while not necessarily implicating κοινωνία or any of its cognates (e.g. κοινωνός).

1.2 The significance of koinonia
At this juncture the question seems to be: what prompted Paul to use the term κοινωνία in 1 Corinthians 10:16? The answer to this question may be sought in the general context of the letter which reveals the occasion. After the initial address, greetings and thanksgiving, (1 Cor 1:1-9) Paul immediately tackles divisions and scandals up till the end of the sixth chapter. We will endeavour to show that although chapters seven to fourteen generally deal with answers to various questions, the theme of unity recurs through and through. After the opening verses Paul embarks directly on dissensions among the faithful (10:10-16), followed by a lengthy discussion on true wisdom as opposed to false wisdom (1:17-3:4). The said teaching on wisdom is based on the humility of the language of the cross (1:18) in contra-distinction to pride which is the enemy of community (cf. v31 in which reference is made to boasting or even the slogan: 'I am for Paul' and 'I am for Apollos' in 3:4).

Our pericope occurs in an apparent sub-section dealing with sacrificial feasts (10:14-22) where the Corinthians are warned not to compromise with idolatry, just as κοινωνία χριστου (v16) is mutually exclusive with κοινωνία τῶν δαιμονίων (v20-22). Even this section about idolatry has an immediate bearing on Paul's concern for the communal fabric because the next sub-section (i.e. 10:23 to the end of ch 10) deals with practical solutions to the question of eating food sacrificed to idols. The point is that if people look each to their own advantage (10:24) with regard to forbidden or unforbidden things (v23), then scandals result with repercussions for those in the community with scruples. Thus the Corinthian community is beset with boastful pride and self-seeking interests, is caught up in personality cults of 'Paul' and 'Apollos', and is torn asunder by precipitating factions. Paul will show that this state of affairs is incompatible with the sacramental nature of the Lord's Supper or the idea of church both symbolised and actualised in the said sacrament. Kilmartin (1969:1043) argues in this connection that 1 Corinthians 10:16 in its immediate context was used by the Fathers since the 4th century when speaking of the relationship of the Eucharist (or the Lord's Supper) to the church. But it is especially with the subject of the Eucharist as a source of union of members of the church among themselves, that we are concerned. This same theme had been pursued by Hamer (1964) in the field of Dogmatics (or Systematic Theology).
2 CORINTHIANS 10:16-22 IN ITS IMMEDIATE CONTEXT

2.1 The text and its context

Verse 16 Τὸ ποτήριον τῆς εὐλογίας ὁ εὐλογοῦμεν, οὐχὶ κοινωνία ἔστιν τοῦ ἁμάτος τοῦ Χριστοῦ; τὸν ἄρτον δὲ κλώμεν, οὐχὶ κοινωνία τοῦ σῶματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ ἔστιν;

Verse 17 ὁτι εἰς ἄρτος, ἐν σῶμα οἱ πολλοὶ ἐσμέν, οἱ γὰρ πάντες ἐκ τοῦ ἐνός ἄρτου μετέχουμεν.

Verse 18 βλέπετε τὸν Ἰσραήλ κατὰ σάρκα· οὐχ οἱ ἐσθίοντες τὰς θυσίας κοινωνοί τοῦ θυσιαστηρίου εἰσίν;

Verse 19 Τί οὖν φημι; ὃτι εἰδωλοθυτον τί ἐστιν ἥ ὃτι εἰδωλόν τί ἐστιν;

Verse 20 ἀλλ ὁτι ἃ θύσουσιν, δαιμονίως και ὃ ὁθές [θύσουσιν]· οὐ θέλω δὲ ὑμᾶς κοινωνοῖ τῶν δαιμονίων γίνεσθαι.

Verse 21 ού δύνασθε ποτήριον κυρίου πίνειν καὶ ποτήριον δαιμονίων, ού δύνασθε τραπέζης κυρίου μετέχειν καὶ τραπέζης δαιμονίων.

Verse 22 ἡ παραξηγήσεων τὸν κύριον; μὴ ἱσχυρότεροι αὐτοῦ ἐσμέν;

2.2 Observations

Where verse 16 speaks of sharing the blood and body of Christ verse 17 speaks of partaking of one loaf.

Verse 18 mentions an analogous situation in Israel according to the flesh, where those who eat the sacrifice are in communion with the altar. The basic nothingness of idols and implications for food offered to them is affirmed in verse 19.

Verse 20 speaks of an analogous situation in pagan sacrifice (notwithstanding the affirmation in v19) where participants are κοινωνοί with the demons.

Verses 21-22 underscore the mutual exclusiveness of κοινωνία χριστοῦ in verse 16 with κοινωνία τῶν δαιμονίων in verse 20.

From these observations one may conclude that if sacrifice can be seen as central to worship among primitive communities (see in this connection especially De Vaux 1961, but also Smith 1969), then for Paul κοινωνία and cognates seem to be fundamental to religion in general whether one thinks of it with reference to the pagan, Old Testament or the New Testament worlds. This conclusion is based on the general impression created by the text. But whether or not Paul was expressing a view shared by some tradition in Israel is another question. Suffice it for the moment merely to state his mind. Yet if one were to attempt to contest the meaning of κοινωνία on the basis of the supposed Israel's rejection of the concept as comprehending the relationship that obtains between God and man (Campbell 1932) then a theological debate ensues, the scope and magnitude of which outdo the limits of this article. This argument was pursued more thoroughly by us earlier on (Sebothoma 1985) where we tried to show that Campbell's (1932) allegations are heavily reliant on Weiss (1910:260). The latter's analysis does not take sufficient account of the nuances present in the concept Opfer as relating to Israel's sacrificial practices in the cult of Jahweh. Jourdan (1948:121f) proceeds in the same vein. It is our submission that this line of argument leads to the rejection of altar in 1 Corinthians 10:17 as a metonym for God without a full scale inquiry into the significance altar in Israel - and therefore its function in relation.
to the concept κοινωνία, with regard to the fundamental institution of worship.

Finally, the setting of the concept κοινωνία is cultic (cf the context of the Lord's Supper from which, according to Seesemann 1933:103 it will acquire a technical meaning), but the significance is destined for the daily life in the Corinthian community here plagued by dissension and idolatry. Is it therefore not possible that Paul saw, as one of the main purposes of the Christian liturgy, that is word and sacrament, a means by which a change of attitude may be effected?

2.3 The line of thought
Verse 16: The term κοινωνία occurs twice, and each time in connection with each element, namely the blood and body of Christ. Hence Hainz (1982) can speak of κοινωνία χριστοῦ. The elements in question are transposed in relation to the Synoptic tradition which begins with the body followed by the blood (cf Mk 14:23par).
Verse 17: In this verse (a) the elements which are shared in verse 16 (i.e. blood and body) are now replaced by one loaf of which we partake; (b) the term κοινωνία is now replaced by μετέχειν, which significantly occurs in connection with the loaf.
Verse 18: A cognate of κοινωνία, that is κοινωνοί is used to parallel κοινωνία in verse 16.
Verse 19: Paul denies that the question of whether or not idols (and demons) exist has any relevance to his argument. Can this perhaps shed some light on how to understand the concept κοινωνία as such?
Verse 20: The cognate κοινωνοί (cf v18) is repeated.
Verses 21-22: The κοινωνία in verse 16 as well as the cognate in verse 18 are contrasted with the cognate in verse 20.

3 RESULT OF INVESTIGATION
Μετέχειν is isolated and has no parallel; it is used in conjunction with one loaf of bread. If the elements of blood and body function as vehicles of Christ's presence, then the development of thought from one loaf of which we partake (μετέχειν) to (one) Christ with whom we are in communion (κοινωνία) becomes feasible, and with it the depth of meaning in κοινωνία as opposed to, for example μετέχειν. This means that while the two words can and indeed have been used interchangeably elsewhere (that is to say if one has no more than the idea of sharing or partaking in mind), the substantive κοινωνία has an additional meaning of bond among the participants which is not found in μετέχειν. (In this connection, there is agreement among Groenewald, Campbell and Seesemann, even though there is no unanimity with regard to the meaning of κοινωνία.)

4 CONCLUSION
4.1 The meaning of κοινωνία may crystallise more clearly when contrasted with μετέχειν. (The position of Campbell, Seesemann and Jourdan, namely that κοινωνία means participation and not community is tantamount to a false either/or dilemma, because the concept in question comprehends both Anteilhaben and Gemeinschaft. Yet it is true that emphasis may indeed fall on either Anteilhaben or Gemeinschaft, depending on the sense elicited by the context — in a given instance. Lastly, with Paul κοινωνία assumes a
Christian meaning which probably has its antecedents also in pagan sacrifices. Since the Hebrew equivalent of κοινωνία, that is יָדוֹן, is never used in relation between God and man, Seesemann's (1933:103) contention that Paul may have borrowed the term from the pagan Sitz im Leben of sacrificial offerings sounds cogent after all.

4.2 The transposition of the representative elements of blood and body coincides with the following: Paul introduces the term κοινωνία in the tradition of Words of Institution, the effect of which affords a re-interpretation of the Christian tradition. It should be noted in this connection that Käsemann (1964:12) does not wish to deny that κοινωνία effects a change in (syntax, and therefore) meaning. His contention is that κοινωνία belonged to an already existing eucharistic terminology. Hainz (1982:22) on the other hand, proceeds from the premise that κοινωνία in the New Testament is a Pauline concept. The shift in meaning should therefore be ascribed to Paul. This change is manifest through a comparison of the κοινωνία ἐστιν in 1 Corinthians 10:16 and the ἐστιν in the Synoptics (cf Mt 26:26-28; Mk 14:22-23 and Lk 22:19f). Note that in 1 Cor 11:23-25 where Paul expressly follows tradition of what he claims to have received from the Lord (was he present at the Last Supper?) and therefore does not insert κοινωνία in the Words of Institution, the juxtaposition of the elements does not occur so that conformity with the Synoptic tradition is restored. Lietzmann (1931:48), apparently following De Witte, wanted κοινωνία in verse 16 to be understood as 'a means to acquire the Gemeinschaft.' This is also the position of Seesemann (1933). But Hainz (1982:121) asks: Is κοινωνία really a means to attain Gemeinschaft or the reverse, namely that Gemeinschaft is mediated through κοινωνία? And yet in spite of differences between Lietzmann, Seesemann et alii on the one hand and Hainz on the other, regarding the exact syntactical effect of κοινωνία on the Words of Institution, there is unanimity among commentators that κοινωνία introduces a conscious accent on community. The transposition of the representative elements seems to allow Paul opportunity to expand on the body of Christ and its implication for community (cf 1 Cor 10:17).

Thus while tradition contents itself with allusion to the death of Christ, Paul, without denying this tradition moves a step further by alluding to communion with the risen Lord (Hainz 1982:21), forged through κοινωνία. The relationship between the (Corinthian) church and the mystery of its foundation is brought to the fore and with it the indicative of the κοινωνία with the risen Lord in view of the current dissension and idolatry, so that the Corinthians may discover for themselves the imperative of the Gemeinschaft consonant with their faith. Consequently the church becomes κοινωνία with the risen Lord and all that it entails. At this stage Paul's creative genius has succeeded in enlivening tradition, without being kept prisoner by mere conformity to tradition.

4.3 That Paul’s use of κοινωνία also reveals his notion of church can further be inferred from reference to Israel in verse 18 (cf Gl 6:16). The κοινωνία χιστοῦ in verse 16 corresponds to the κοινωνία τοῦ θεοκριτοῦ in verse 18. Paul does not venture to speak directly of κοινωνία with God, much as יָדוֹן or κοινων- were never used for the relation to God in the Old
Testament (cf Hs 4:17; Is 44:11). And yet in 1 Corinthians 10:18 the altar may signify the presence of God among his people (De Vaux 1961:413-414) and the κοινωνία cognate the subsequent bond between participants in the sacrifices (De Vaux 1961:413-414). Here the mediation between God and man is achieved through the altar, and in the new dispensation through Christ (v16).

Now, while there is terminological correspondence between κοινωνία in verse 16 and κοινωνία in verse 18 much as the Christian community may regard itself as the Israel of God (cf Gl 6:16), Paul refers to Israel not as a complement but a warning (cf 1 Cor 10:1-13). A blessing arising from membership of the people of God seems by its very nature to entail responsibility towards each other. The position of the Church within the framework of the Heils geschichte between the advent of Christ and the parousia situates the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper within the framework of theologia crucis, and the Christian within theologia viatorum towards the Last Judgement (Käsemann 1964:123). Hence κοινωνία helps extricate the Corinthians from a false conceptualisation of the sacraments as arbitrary means of grace cut off, as it were, from their personal attitude of faith. If, however, the Corinthian community would heed Paul’s warning based on the analogous circumstances in Israel eis to mi elai in Sxvotan kakhon (10:6), then the true Sun will in time rise from the east and with it joy and unity among the people of God symbolised by the imagery of the eschatological banquet in Patria, presently merely foreshadowed by the Abendmahlgemeinschaft (κοινωνία χριστοῦ). For Käsemann ‘the individual endowed with charisma only reflects the praesentia Christi in everyday life in so far as he is oriented towards the assembly’ (Käsemann 1964:79). In a word, Paul advocates a plea to narrow the gap between word and sacrament on the one hand, and its corollary of faith-commitment in day-to-day living, on the other — under pain of empty ritualism. Κοινωνία makes of Paul a New Testament prophet!

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