

FIRST CORINTHIANS

Chapter 11

11 Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.

Head Coverings

2 Now I commend you because you remember me in everything and maintain the traditions even as I delivered them to you. 3 But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God. 4 Every man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head, 5 but every wife who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head, since it is the same as if her head were shaven. 6 For if a wife will not cover her head, then she should cut her hair short. But since it is disgraceful for a wife to cut off her hair or shave her head, let her cover her head. 7 For a man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God, but woman is the glory of man. 8 For man was not made from woman, but woman from man. 9 Neither was man created for woman, but woman for man. 10 That is why a wife ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels. 11 Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man nor man of woman; 12 for as woman was made from man, so man is now born of woman. And all things are from God. 13 Judge for yourselves: is it proper for a wife to pray to God with her head uncovered? 14 Does not nature itself teach you that if a man wears long hair it is a disgrace for him, 15 but if a woman has long hair, it is her glory? For her hair is given to her for a covering. 16 If anyone is inclined to be contentious, we have no such practice, nor do the churches of God.

Christ's example and Paul's example will guide us in the practice of our Christian liberty. The moral and spiritual welfare of our fellow Christians is more important than the exercise of our Christian liberty. (PBC)

11:2–16 The situations described in this section are largely foreign to our modern context. In Roman culture, both men and women conveyed their status, including their marital situation, by their appearance. A head covering, basically a shawl draped over the head, conveyed that a woman was married and intended to remain in that situation. Some Roman women, however, sought to live as “new women” who did not intend to remain faithful to their husbands. Women who uncovered their head immodestly drew attention to themselves by signaling that they were available to other men. In the name of “Gospel freedom” and “rights,” this thinking and behavior began to influence Christians in Corinth. Paul's instruction, as in chs 8–10, reminds the Corinthians that their actions always communicate something to others. They are to refrain from behavior that communicates something at odds with the Christian life. (TLSB)

Paul has just appealed to the Corinthians to model themselves on him, just as he imitates Christ (1 Cor 11:1). Now, before he turns to the important issues which will engage his attention for the rest of the letter, he commends them because they do in fact keep his words and example constantly before their minds and retain the Gospel traditions he delivered to them (11:2). This is no empty compliment, merely to secure their goodwill. From the beginning of the epistle he has expressed his gratitude for the way they have been enriched in Christ in all speech and knowledge and other gifts (1:4–7), and for their high calling in Christ (1:26–31). While there has been much

for the apostle to correct in the young church, he has fond memories of their faithful adherence to the traditions he has handed on to them as their father in the faith (4:15). These traditions encompass not only worship practices, the Lord's Supper in particular (11:23–26), but also the basic and essential teachings of the Gospel itself (15:1–4). (CC)

However, while Paul is generally grateful for their adherence to the Gospel, he must still call them to account for deviating from the traditions in a number of areas: an attitude toward men's and women's head-coverings that may have been influenced by the pagan religious environment (11:3–16); a lax attitude toward the Lord's Supper (11:17–34); an unbalanced attitude toward spiritual gifts (12:1–14:33); the role of women in worship (14:34–40); and a failure to understand the implications of Christ's resurrection (15:1–58). (CC)

11:2 *remember me*. Recall what Paul taught, and live by it. (TLSB)

11:3–16 The subject of this section is propriety in public worship, not male-female relations in general. Paul is concerned, however, that the proper relationship between husbands and wives be reflected in public worship. As in the previous section, he desires that all be done to the glory of God (10:31). (CSB)

11:3 *head*. That which is preeminent within a relationship. The “head” is responsible for the actions of the body. As a metaphor for the Church, Paul notes that the body has many parts with different roles (12:12–26), the “head” of which is Christ. So also here, the “head” is that which is preeminent, though not greater than the other parts, because the head is most prominent, visible, and necessary for the proper function of the rest of the body. The Father is the head of Christ according to Christ's human nature. Christ willingly obeys the Father, as Luther said, “God said to His beloved Son: ‘It's time to have compassion. Then go, bright jewel of My crown, And bring to all salvation.’ ... The Son obeyed His Father's will” (LSB 556:5–6; cf Jn 6:35–40). The relationship does not make the Son inferior. A husband and wife live in a relationship with different roles, yet without implication of superiority or inferiority (Eph 5:22–33). John Chrysostom: “Had Paul meant to speak of rule and subjection ... he would not have brought forward the instance of a wife, but rather of a slave and a master.” (NPNF 1 12:150). The roles of husbands and wives became an issue in Corinth, where some women gave the appearance of no longer desiring to stay faithful to their husbands. (TLSB)

Paul turns first to the issue of men's and women's head-coverings. Part of the difficulty in interpreting this section of the epistle lies in our lack of precise knowledge of the customs in the first-century Mediterranean world. But there may be a partial parallel in the practices of modern Islam, where even moderate Muslim women cover their hair in public; it is unthinkable that a woman should enter a mosque and remove her head-covering. This modern practice has its roots in the same Middle Eastern and Mediterranean world which Paul is addressing. (CC)

From the outset it should be noted that Paul does not wish to set in concrete a rule *about specific practices* for all places and all times regarding head-coverings. (When he does state a universal and permanent rule for practice, he often refers to a direct command from God, as in 14:37, or to the teaching or practice “in every church” or “in all the churches,” as in 4:17; 7:17; 14:33.) Rather, he is establishing the *universal and permanent principle* that men and women at worship should conduct themselves modestly and sensibly (1 Tim 2:9; cf. 1 Pet 3:1–6), in keeping with whatever happen to be the *customs* of the time. In a similar way, Jesus laid down the permanent principle (“a new commandment”) that his disciples should love one another (Jn 13:34) and, in keeping with the custom of his day, exemplified that principle by washing the disciples' feet (Jn 13:3–17), but Jesus did not command the specific *practice* of foot-washing for all Christians of

all times. The universal and binding principle of love finds expression today in different ways of showing consideration and courtesy to one another. (CC)

Apparently some of the more “liberated” women in the congregation were abandoning the head-covering that both Jewish women and many Greco-Roman women traditionally wore in public in the first century. By appearing at worship in a manner that tended to blur the created distinction between the sexes, they were conducting themselves as if the new age had not only been inaugurated in Christ (which is true) but also was already consummated (cf. 1 Cor 4:8), so that there were no more distinct gender roles, as there will not be in heaven (Lk 20:34–36). These women thought they could lay aside the markings of their womanhood and dress like men; they were not going to be bound by the conventions accepted as proper for the respective sexes. But Paul believes they have gone beyond the bounds of propriety and are acting immodestly. His concern is similar to Peter’s in 1 Pet 3:1–6. (CC)

The meaning of headship has been much debated, especially since the 1960s. Before the modern debate on women’s ordination, commentators never questioned that by “head of” Paul meant “authority over” (“the authority over every man is Christ,” and so on). Recent commentators, however, have advanced the view that κεφαλή, “head,” means “source,” as a river has its source in its headwaters. But while the word “head” may be *applied* or *refer* to a river’s headwaters, that application does not necessarily mean that the word *means* “source,” even when used of a river’s headwaters (see the following footnote). Nor is there any evidence that κεφαλή cannot and does not signify “authority” in the texts under consideration. Suffice it to note here that Paul’s discussion in 11:2–6 should be connected with the concept of subordination in this epistle’s other key passage on the role of women in worship, 14:33b–38. Even more compelling is Eph 5:22–24, where Paul uses the same language of headship (“the husband is the *head* [κεφαλή] of the wife as also Christ is the *head* [κεφαλή] of the church”) and immediately clarifies what he means in terms of subordination: “Just as the church is subject to Christ, so also [let] the wives [be subject] to their husbands in everything.” (CC)

But we must immediately add that Paul never conceives of the man’s authority in terms of a harsh subjugation of the woman to his will. The apostle is not granting to men the authority to wield autocratic power, but the responsibility for loving, self-sacrificing service. As soon as he has laid down in Ephesians that wives should be subject to their husbands, he adds that husbands are to love their wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself up to death for her (Eph 5:25). This is consistent with the whole NT witness concerning the exercise of authority among Christians. Unlike the Gentiles, they are not to lord it over one another but be servants (Lk 22:24–27). Likewise, pastors are not to lord it over the flock, but be examples (1 Pet 5:3). (CC)

When Christian headship is exercised in a spirit of loving service, those Christians subject to such authority will not chafe under it or feel demeaned. Following the pattern of the apostle’s argument, it must be conceded that it is no more demeaning for a woman to be subject to a man than it is for the man to be subject to Christ, and for Christ to be subject to God the Father. The argument must be taken as a whole. The parallel statements about Christ and God the Father also require this headship to be within a Christian context; Paul’s words do not necessarily pertain to secular institutions or issues. (CC)

Those who argue that by “head” Paul means “source” have charged that adherents of the traditional view have fallen into the ancient heresy of subordinationism. But this charge fails to take into account the distinction between essence and role.²⁵ A person may be essentially equal to another, but have a different role within a structure or relationship. When Paul says that “the head of Christ is God” (1 Cor 11:3), he is not denying the full divinity of Christ, nor is he saying that

God the Son is in any way inferior to God the Father because the Son willingly submitted himself to the Father's plan (Phil 2:5–11). For any team to function effectively, there must be a recognized leader and those who willingly follow that lead. The Christian members of a congregation, for example, are equals in God's sight with the pastor who, by God's will and call, leads them. (CC)

Some understand the term "head" to refer primarily to the concept of honor, in that one's physical head is the seat of his honor (cf. vv. 4–5). Thus as Christ honored God, man is to honor Christ, and woman is to honor her husband. Others see in the word "head" the idea of authority (which would also include the concept of honor). They point out that Paul clearly uses the term in the sense of authority in Eph 1:21–22 ("under his feet"; "head over everything"), in Eph 5:22–23 (where headship is seen in a context of submission) and in Col 1:18; 2:10. Thus as Christ is in authority over man and is therefore to be honored by man, so the husband is in a position of authority and is therefore to be honored by his wife. (CSB)

11:4 *prays or prophesies*. Neither action is specific to the pastoral office but may be done by any Christian. This is not the NT office of "prophet," which is closely related to the office of pastor (Eph 4:11). (TLSB)

On the other hand (1 Cor 11:5a), any woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors the man who is set in authority over her (her father or her husband, or perhaps the pastor or elder). There is ample testimony that in general it was customary in Paul's day for both Jewish and Greek women to wear head-coverings in public.³⁰ Paul is clearly pressing for the maintenance of this general custom when Christians assemble for worship. He may also have wanted to avoid any suggestion that Christian women were imitating the devotees of the Dionysian mysteries, who participated in the rites with long, loose, uncovered hair. (CC)

dishonors his head. In the OT, long hair was a Nazirite sign of commitment to God (Nu 6:5), and few modern cultures hold that long hair shames a man. However, Roman culture viewed long hair on a man as a disgrace. This may allude to the respect and honor that was accorded the aged, whose bald heads were viewed as signs of wisdom, experience, and honor. (TLSB)

In 1 Cor 11:4–6, Paul now proceeds to spell out the implications of the headship principle for public worship in Corinth. Anyone who prays or prophesies should show proper deference to the one set over him or her as the immediate "head." In the case of a man, he should not cover his head, for as 11:7 explains, he is the direct "image and glory of God." (CC)

Is Paul speaking merely of a hypothetical case, or were some of the Corinthian men actually covering their heads as they prayed and prophesied? Parallels from Roman religious practices of the period suggest that some of the congregation's elite may have been pulling their togas up over their heads, in imitation of pagan priests who were normally members of the elite. "The dress was a result of these individuals being contentious (φιλόνηκος) ([11:]16)." (CC)

The first use of "head" in this verse refers to man's physical head; the second refers to his spiritual Head (Christ)—or perhaps is intended in a double sense. In the culture of Paul's day, men uncovered their heads in worship to signify their respect for and submission to deity. When a man prayed or prophesied with his head covered, he failed to show the proper attitude toward Christ. (CSB)

11:5–6 For a woman, taking off her head covering in public and exposing her hair was a sign of loose morals and sexual promiscuity. Paul says she might as well have her hair cut or shaved off.

The shaved head indicated that the woman either had been publicly disgraced because of some shameful act or was openly flaunting her independence and her refusal to be in submission to her husband. Paul's message to her was: Show your respect for and submission to your husband by covering your head during public worship. (CSB)

dishonors her head. Signals to all present that she is no longer married or faithful to her husband, much like a harlot. (TLSB)

If the women wish to flaunt their liberty by abandoning the customary head-covering, Paul says (11:5b–6) they should go the whole way and not just get their hair cut short like a man's, but be shorn like a sheep (κείρω in 11:6) or shaved bald (ξυράω in 11:5–6). “If she flings away the covering provided by Divine ordinance, let her also fling away the covering provided by nature.” The pattern of Paul's argument is similar to Gal 5:12, where he expresses the wish that the Judaizing advocates of circumcision would go the whole way (actually, *far beyond* Jewish practice) and get themselves castrated. Likewise, he argues, the liberated women should be consistent. If they wish to blur the distinction between the sexes, they should be consistently masculine, leaving no one in doubt about their intentions. On the other hand, if it was considered disgraceful for a woman to have a masculine haircut or be completely shaved (and there is no doubt that the society of Paul's day considered that disgraceful), then she should accept and glory in her femininity (1 Cor 11:7) and wear a head-covering. (CC)

Paul's argument draws on the customs of his day. One may ask whether those customs are relevant for all peoples of all cultures. Paul seems to say in 11:13–16 that to some extent at least, hairstyles may reflect natural law, the innate ordering which God built into creation. (CC)

same as if her head were shaven. The ultimate disgrace; a shaved head signaled both loss of status as a wife and, in some Roman cities, conviction of prostitution. (TLSB)

Some do not see in these verses a temporary cultural significance to the covering/uncovering of the head. They insist that, since Paul referred to the order of creation (vv. 7–9), his directive is not to be restricted to his time. Thus women of all times should wear a head covering. (CSB)

Others find a lasting principle in the passage requiring wives, in all ways, to show respect for their husbands by submitting to their authority—not merely by a particular style of attire, but by godly lives. Man, who was created first, is to have authority over his wife (see 1Ti 2:11–14). The wife was made out of his body (Ge 2:21–24) to be his helper and companion (Ge 2:20). She is to honor her husband by submitting to him as her head (see v. 3). (CSB)

Still others see these verses, not as a mandate for all marriages, but as reflecting marriage relationships at that time in Corinth and therefore giving a reason why the women there should have covered their heads (v. 10). They point to vv. 11–12 as a contrast, emphasizing equality and mutual dependence between men and women who are “in the Lord” (v. 11; see Gal 3:28; 1Pe 3:7). (CSB)

11:7–9 image. Highlights that man is given some of the attributes of God (Gn 1:27), primarily authority over creation. (TLSB)

Why is it disgraceful for a woman to discard her head-covering (1 Cor 11:2–6)? And why, on the other hand, should a man not cover his head (11:2–6)? The reason is to be found in the *order of creation* recorded in Genesis 1–2. The man should not have his head covered because he is “the image and glory of God” (1 Cor 11:7). When he worships, he should not be rude or disrespectful

by failing to remove his head-covering in God's presence. It may be helpful to draw a comparison with the not too recent past, when men commonly wore hats. If a man did not remove his hat in church, he was considered rude. Likewise, a man or a boy would remove his cap or hat when he met a woman, spoke with someone of importance, said the pledge of allegiance, or sang the national anthem. To "doff your cap" was a sign of respect. (CC)

The expression "image of God" (Gen 1:27; 1 Cor 11:7) refers to man being the representative of God, particularly in his authority over the creation (Gen 1:28–30; 9:6–7). While the creation accounts do not refer to man as the "glory of God," similar expressions are found in the psalms, including Ps 8:5: "You [God] have crowned him with glory and honor." As a work of art brings glory to the artist, so man brings glory to his Creator. (CC)

On the other hand, the woman brings glory to the man (1 Cor 11:7). Paul is not denying that she too, like the man, was created in God's image (Gen 1:27), but his focus at this point is on her relationship to the man as one who derives her being from him and exists to bring glory to him as her head. By attaching herself to him and being his helper, she honors her husband. See the parallels in 1 Cor 11:14–15, where "glory for/to her" (11:15) is in antithesis to "disgrace for/to him" (11:14). For other parallels compare 1 Thess 2:20 (ὁμειζ γάρ ἐστε ἡ δόξα ἡμῶν, "you are our glory") and a Jewish inscription: "Blessed Lucilla, the δόξα ['glory'] of Sophronius." (CC)

1 Cor 11:7b is elliptical. Fully stated, it would read: "But the woman *should have her head covered because she* is the glory of man." By praying or prophesying with her head uncovered, "she brings shame on the man whose glory she is intended to be." (CC)

In 11:8–9 Paul gives two reasons why the woman is man's glory. First in 11:8, he appeals to her origin, sculpted from one of Adam's ribs (Gen 2:22–23). The man is therefore her source, and she should honor the one from whom she came. Paul affirms this also in 1 Tim 2:13. A second reason why the woman is man's glory is that the man was not created for the woman, but she for him (1 Cor 11:9). According to Gen 2:18, she was formed for the purpose of providing Adam with a helper. So, "neither in her origin, nor in the purpose for which she was created, can the woman claim priority." And this original ordering of the creation has ongoing significance for the relationship between the sexes.¹⁹ The man's priority in the order of creation lays on him the responsibility of leadership, while the woman is to be helpful (Gen 2:18), submissive, supportive, and complementary. (CC)

Paul began his argument from the order of creation by saying that a man ought not to cover his head (1 Cor 11:7). Now he rounds off the passage by saying that a woman ought to cover her head (11:10). Both commands are supported by the reasons given in 11:8–9. (CC)

glory. Highlights that, in accomplishing his purpose, man brings glory to God (Ps 8:5). (TLSB)

glory of man. The woman is created "from man" (v 8) in order to be a "helper" for man (v 9) in the creation over which God had given the man responsibility (Gn 2:15). By also having this authority, she is likewise in the image of God (Gn 1:27), but Paul does not mention that here because he is discussing the relationship between man and woman, not woman and God. (TLSB)

One important consequence of man being created in God's image is his commission to represent his Maker in *ruling* the creation (Gen 1:26–28; 2:15–24). Since he directly reflects the divine glory, it would not be proper for him to cover his head; this would dishonor Christ, his true head. Paul's argument is based on the so-called "order of creation." According to the order given in

Genesis, “Adam was formed first, then Eve” (1 Tim 2:13; see also Gen 2:4–24). Thus Adam was shaped directly as “the image and glory of God” (1 Cor 11:7), and then the woman was taken out of him and thus came after him, deriving her being from him according to that order (Gen 2:21–23). (CC)

11:10 *angels*. Perhaps mentioned here because they are interested in all aspects of the Christian’s salvation and are sensitive to decorum in worship (cf. Eph 3:10; 1Ti 5:21). (CSB)

A difficult phrase that likely conveys the idea of “in heaven, so on earth.” Just as angels observe proper respect in their worship of the exalted Lord, so on earth His people should do the same. (TLSB)

symbol of authority. Understood by some to refer to the woman’s authority as co-ruler with man in the creation (Ge 1:26–27). Others take the phrase to refer to the man’s authority as properly recognized by the woman in her head covering. (CSB)

In Roman culture, the head covering signified a married woman’s status. (TLSB)

In 11:10 the apostle simply calls the head-covering an “authority.” Many translations help out the Greek by adding “a sign of” or “a symbol of” (cf. NIV and NEB: “a sign of authority”; similarly, Living Bible, Phillips, JB). While such attempts to make the meaning plainer may be justified, it becomes more problematic when translators go a step further, as the GNB does with its paraphrase, “a woman should have a covering over her head to show that she is under her husband’s authority.”²² It is difficult to find evidence that ἐξουσία ever bears that passive sense (“*under* authority”) or that it ever refers to an authority different from the subject of the sentence. (CC)

A more likely explanation is proposed by BAGD, s.v. ἐξουσία, 5: “The veil may also have been simply a symbol of womanly dignity, esp[ecially] befitting a Christian woman.” This view has been stated eloquently by Ramsay:

In Oriental lands the veil is the power and the honour and dignity of the woman. With the veil on her head, she can go anywhere in security and profound respect. ...

But without the veil the woman is a thing of nought, whom any one may insult. ... A woman’s authority and dignity vanish along with the all-covering veil that she discards. (CC)

(This commentary’s view is that the head-covering is not a veil, but a wrap similar to a shawl or scarf.) Similarly (at least until recently in some cultural contexts), for a married woman to wear a wedding ring was a protection. It enabled her to do things she could otherwise not do and go places to which she would otherwise have no access. Her ring was a sign to the world that it was “hands off” with this woman; here was a woman to be respected. (CC)

Why does Paul now add in 11:10 that the woman should dress in a dignified manner “for the sake of the angels”? Some church fathers suggested that “angels” here mean the bishops (the interpretation of Ambrose) or presbyters (Ephraem) or all the clergy (Primasius). But, with a few exceptions (e.g., Lk 9:52), the NT nearly always uses the term to designate supernatural beings, and we would need clearer indicators to go in another direction. Other scholars have thought Paul has in mind evil angels who—in the spirit of Gen 6:2—might lust after women who fail to cover their heads. But as has been pointed out, “the [definite] article is against it: οἱ ἄγγελοι [“the angels”] always means good angels.” The best suggestion is that Paul refers to the holy angels,

who are present in Christian worship. The Corinthians knew from their Greek Bibles that it was “before angels” that they sang their psalms (LXX Ps 137:1 [MT/ET 138:1]). The church father Chrysostom challenged his congregation: “Don’t you know that you are standing in the midst of the angels? With them you are singing, with them you are chanting, and do you stand there laughing?” Likewise, Christians today confess in the liturgy that it is “with angels and archangels and with all the company of heaven” that “we laud and magnify your [God’s] glorious name. ...”³⁰ If the women of Corinth thought little of causing offense to the men, they should consider that their departure from the created order was also an offense to the angels, who never fail to carry out the role God assigns them for the benefit of his saints (Heb 1:14). (CC) Why does Paul now add in 11:10 that the woman should dress in a dignified manner “for the sake of the angels”? Some church fathers suggested that “angels” here mean the bishops (the interpretation of Ambrose) or presbyters (Ephraem) or all the clergy (Primasius). But, with a few exceptions (e.g., Lk 9:52), the NT nearly always uses the term to designate supernatural beings, and we would need clearer indicators to go in another direction. Other scholars have thought Paul has in mind evil angels who—in the spirit of Gen 6:2—might lust after women who fail to cover their heads. But as has been pointed out, “the [definite] article is against it: οἱ ἄγγελοι [“the angels”] always means good angels.” The best suggestion is that Paul refers to the holy angels, who are present in Christian worship. The Corinthians knew from their Greek Bibles that it was “before angels” that they sang their psalms (LXX Ps 137:1 [MT/ET 138:1]). The church father Chrysostom challenged his congregation: “Don’t you know that you are standing in the midst of the angels? With them you are singing, with them you are chanting, and do you stand there laughing?” Likewise, Christians today confess in the liturgy that it is “with angels and archangels and with all the company of heaven” that “we laud and magnify your [God’s] glorious name. ...”³⁰ If the women of Corinth thought little of causing offense to the men, they should consider that their departure from the created order was also an offense to the angels, who never fail to carry out the role God assigns them for the benefit of his saints (Heb 1:14). (CC)

11:11 in the Lord. In those transformed by Baptism into Christ (Rm 6:1–4). (TLSB)

not independent. Different from the attitude of the prevailing culture in which women were seeking independent roles. Paul does not place woman “under” man but points out that in God’s order both need the other. The difference is in roles, not in worth before God. (TLSB)

Paul now introduces an important qualification. The previous argument (1 Cor 11:3–10) in favor of the man’s headship and the woman’s submission should not be misunderstood as though the woman were an inferior creature. While the order of creation has led to their having distinctive roles, there is also “a profound interdependence and mutuality present in the male-female relationship, and neither sex can boast over the other.”³³ Neither can exist without the other. There is full equality “in the Lord” (11:11) created by the baptismal unity of male and female in Christ (Gal 3:28). Christian Baptism is the seal of the new covenant, a “circumcision not done by human hands ... the circumcision of Christ” (Col 2:11). All Christians equally are incorporated into Christ through Baptism (Gal 3:28; Col 3:11). Paul will say later in 1 Cor 12:13, “We all were baptized with one Spirit into one body, whether Jews or Greeks or slaves or free, and we all were given to drink one Spirit.” To use the terminology of Christian dogmatics, while there are role differences according to the order of creation (11:3–10, 13–16), there is equality and unity according to the order of redemption (11:11–12). (CC)

Many modern interpreters try to set the order of redemption in opposition to the order of creation, and argue that the two are antithetical or incompatible. Often the claim is made that the order of redemption somehow trumps or renders obsolete the order of creation already now, in this life. But such a conflict is foreign to Paul’s theology. Paul sees the two orders as complementary, and

the Christian life is to be lived in obedience and harmony within both orders. Paul now illustrates that by means of a comparison that likens the order of redemption to an aspect of the order of creation. Although woman originally came from man, ever since then man comes into being “through the woman” (11:12). This observation from the course of human reproduction serves as a powerful analogy and testimony to the man and the woman’s interdependence “in the Lord” (11:11). In Christ there is complete unity. Furthermore, both man and woman, indeed all created things, owe their existence to God (11:12). He is the ultimate source of everything and everyone. And his ultimate goal is for all creation to be united under his headship in Christ (Eph 1:10). (CC)

11:12 *all things are from God.* God is the head of all creation. (TLSB)

11:13–15 Having appealed to creation in vv 9–12, Paul next appeals to their shared experience. (TLSB)

11:13–14 *proper.* Believers must be conscious of how their actions appear in their culture, in light of what is considered to be honorable behavior. (CSB)

Paul returns now to the order of creation (as in 1 Cor 11:7–10). He appeals to the Corinthians’ sanctified common sense (cf. 10:15). By means of a rhetorical question which expects the answer no (11:13), he calls on them to exercise their sense for what is fitting and appropriate. Surely it cannot be right for a woman to participate in public worship without the appropriate head-covering. Normally the verb “to pray” (προσεύχομαι) does not have an object. The addition of the words “to God” in 11:13 reminds the Corinthians of the solemn nature of worship. Here they approach the almighty and holy God, before whom the seraphim cover their faces and cry, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory” (Is 6:2–3). In his presence the women should show due decorum. (CC)

By the expression “nature itself” (1 Cor 11:14) Paul means “the natural and instinctive sense of right and wrong that God has planted in us, especially with respect to sexuality.” This sense has been implanted since creation, although it has become obscured and is not always reliable because of the fall into sin. Just as nature teaches (11:14) men instinctively to shrink away from doing what our culture labels as feminine, so it teaches women to dress and behave in distinctively feminine ways. Paul does not appeal to “nature” as frequently as do the Stoics, who regarded nature as divine.³⁸ But the concept plays an important role in another Pauline discussion of human sexuality, Rom 1:26–27, where he condemns homosexuality as a practice that is likewise contrary to the divinely instilled sense of order and propriety. The fall into sin has led some to pervert God’s order by doing what is grossly unnatural. (CC)

Paul’s appeal to nature’s teaching with respect to hair lengths probably means that (despite variations across the centuries and cultures) human beings generally have an instinctive sense that long hair makes a more glorious and fitting adornment on a woman than it does on a man, and that, conversely, short or closely cropped hair (not to mention baldness!) is more acceptable and “natural” for a man than for a woman. Normally—though with numerous exceptions—this instinctive sense of what accords with the created order has been reflected in hairstyles through the ages. From numerous paintings, statues, reliefs, and coins from the Greco-Roman era we know that it was customary for Greek and Roman men to cut their hair short.⁴⁰ The Spartans stood out as exceptions to the rule, drawing comment from Greek authors. According to the OT Israelite men were not to trim the edges of their beards or the hair on the side of their temples (and that practice continues for the most pious Jews today), but that stipulation (Lev 19:27; cf. Lev 21:5) suggests that the rest of the hair probably was trimmed. The OT instruction for those who had taken a Nazirite vow stipulated that they were not to cut their hair until the vow was

completed, but such a vow was an exception from the general norm for Israelite men (Num 6:1–21; Judges 13–16). From the NT Scriptures we know that Jewish men kept their hair trimmed, unless they were under a vow (Acts 18:18; 21:24). (CC)

One powerful expression of sentiment on the subject of what is natural comes from the Stoic Epictetus:

Come, let us leave the chief works of nature, and consider merely what she does in passing. Can anything be more useless than the hairs on a chin? Well, what then? Has not nature used even these in the most suitable way possible? Has she not by these means distinguished between the male and the female? ... Again, in the case of women, just as nature has mingled in their voice a certain softer note, so likewise she has taken the hair from their chins. ... Wherefore, we ought to preserve the signs which God has given; we ought not to throw them away; we ought not, so far as in us lies, to confuse the sexes which have been distinguished in this fashion. (CC)

11:13 By removing the head covering, the woman signals that she is abandoning the role given her by God. Seeking to turn away from God but then turning to Him in prayer are contradictory. (TLSB)

11:14 *nature*. No Scripture passage teaches this, nor is Paul appealing to the created order. Instead, as in v 13, he calls them to consider how things are in their culture. (TLSB)

11:15 *long hair*. Of course, Paul does not prescribe details of hair lengths and hairstyles which may vary in keeping with cultural fashions. But he makes it plain that a man who draws attention to himself by his abnormally long hair departs from the natural order and brings dishonor on himself. On the other hand, long hair is a woman’s glory. It is given to her by God her Creator as a covering. By providing her with this glorious natural endowment, God is indicating that she should be appropriately covered at worship (see also 1 Cor 11:2–6). (CC)

covering. Summarizes vv 9–12 and 14–15, pointing out that the practices of Roman culture regarding head coverings and gender distinction are in harmony with God’s will. Women typically braided or knotted their hair and also wore a cloth or veil covering. (TLSB)

11:16 *contentious*. Deviating from apostolic teaching and practice passed on by Paul and others, including Sosthenes (1:1). (TLSB)

no such practice. Removal of gender distinctions by altering the practices of head covering or uncovering. (TLSB)

† The Greek word for “other” can also mean “such.” The word order in Greek suggests the following translation: “If anyone ... about this, it is not we who have such a practice—nor the churches of God.” Paul means that neither he nor the church has introduced such a practice; they are merely following the current social custom. (CSB)

Paul has concluded what he wants to say on the subject. He is not willing to enter into further argument. If anyone—whether a woman who wants to assert her “freedom,” or a man who wants to spring to her defense against the apostle—would like to argue the point (literally, “is disposed to be a lover of arguing,” 11:16), he or she should not bother Paul and his fellow apostles and pastors. For “we have no such custom, nor do the churches of God” (11:16). As he does elsewhere (4:17; 7:17; 14:33), Paul appeals here to the universal practice of the churches. And he reminds the Corinthians that these are the churches *of God*. Ultimately, anyone who wishes to

defy apostolic practice and obscure the created distinctions between the sexes at worship is at loggerheads with God. Hays comments:

The created *distinction* between man and woman should be honored in the church. Symbolic “gender-bending” actions in which women and men seek to reject their specific sexual identities are a sign not of authentic spirituality but of an adolescent impatience with the world in which God has placed us. We are not disembodied spirits; consequently, spiritual maturity in Christ will lead us to become mature women and men in Christ. Our dress and outward appearance should appropriately reflect our gender identity; to blur these distinctions is to bring needless shame upon the community. In a time of rampant confusion about gender identity in our culture, Paul’s teaching on this matter is timely for us. A healthy community needs men and women together (v. 11), not a group of people striving for sexless neutrality. (CC)

churches of God. Paul appeals to the broader church to show that this is not merely his teaching. (TLSB)

11:1–16 “Actions speak louder than words” summarizes much of chs 8–11, especially this section. These Roman women think they can go along with cultural trends. However, removal of their hair covering would be similar to a woman in our culture removing her wedding ring: it symbolizes that she no longer intends to live in a faithful marriage relationship. Paul is concerned about outward conduct but also about the roles God has given to each gender. The removal of the covering would eliminate the gender distinctions God established. The Lord has provided order in the family through faithful husbands and fathers and dedicated wives and mothers. When we seek to live in ways other than how He has called us to live, we move away from Him. Yet we are not abandoned to drift about in this world. God’s Son loved us with a perfect love, sacrificing Himself on the cross for us. The forgiveness won for us there cleanses us from all our failures, even where we have failed those closest to us. • Made new in You, O Christ, we love as You loved and serve as You served. Set our hearts to do Your will, O God. Amen. (TLSB)

The Lord's Supper

17 But in the following instructions I do not commend you, because when you come together it is not for the better but for the worse. 18 For, in the first place, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you. And I believe it in part, 19 for there must be factions among you in order that those who are genuine among you may be recognized. 20 When you come together, it is not the Lord's supper that you eat. 21 For in eating, each one goes ahead with his own meal. One goes hungry, another gets drunk. 22 What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I commend you in this? No, I will not. 23 For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, 24 and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, “This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” 25 In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” 26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. 27 Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. 28 Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. 29 For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself. 30 That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died. 31 But if we judged ourselves truly, we would not be judged. 32 But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world. 33 So then, my

brothers, when you come together to eat, wait for[one another— 34 if anyone is hungry, let him eat at home—so that when you come together it will not be for judgment. About the other things I will give directions when I come.

11:17 *I do not commend you.* Contrast with v 2; while the head-covering issue was problematic, improper practices at the Lord's Supper needed sterner rebuke. (TLSB)

come together. A meal that also included worship (see note, v 21) took place in homes, likely the larger homes of wealthier members of the community. The formal dining area (the *triclinium*) of a home was of limited size. Thus, the Roman host invited his friends and those whom he wished to honor to dine in this room and share the best food. Others were forced to eat elsewhere, likely in the atrium. In this way, social distinctions were wrongly observed in the congregation. This contradicted the purpose of the Lord's Supper: to offer the forgiveness of sins, which creates unity with Christ and unity with one another. The Corinthians were using the meal to create divisions (vv 18–19), rejecting the very forgiveness offered in the Sacrament. (TLSB)

11:18 *divisions.* Paul had already dealt with one aspect of these divisions (1:10–17). (CSB)

Distinctions within the Church based on human reasons, condemned also in Gal 5:20. (TLSB)

Paul has heard reports that when the Corinthians come together as a congregation there are divisions among them (11:18). These reports may have come to him from Chloe's people, as did the earlier reports of divisions (1:10–12), or from the three-man delegation from Corinth (Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus, 16:17). The divisions that led them to express their concerns to the apostle were probably of a different nature from those mentioned in 1:10–12, where people were egotistically aligning themselves with one church leader in opposition to another. There Paul spoke of four factions, whose politicking no doubt disrupted many aspects of the congregation's life. Now, in connection with the congregation's meals, he mentions only two groups, the "haves," who are prosperous and have plenty to eat, and the "have nots," who go away hungry (11:21). (CC)

I believe it in part. Paul's first comment on the reports is cautious: "to some extent I believe it" (11:18). As an experienced pastor he is aware that not everyone will have been guilty of arrogant behavior. So "he excepts the innocent and uses a mild term ... while his love was unaffected by it."⁷ Despite the reports, he still has a love for them which "hopes all things" (13:7). (CC)

But Paul does believe the report, at least to a degree, not only because of the witnesses' credibility but also because of his prior understanding of the church's situation in the world. His words in 11:19 parallel those of Jesus: "It is necessary that offenses come, but woe to the person through whom the offense comes" (Mt 18:7). Although Paul began the epistle deploring the existence of factions in Corinth and encouraging God's people to maintain their baptismal unity in the Spirit, at the same time he recognizes a certain sad inevitability about the rise of factions, stemming as they do from human self-centeredness and self-will. Factionalism is one of the works of the flesh listed in Gal 5:20, and those who belong to Christ are to crucify the flesh (Gal 5:24). (CC)

11:19 *may be recognized.* As deplorable as factions may be, they serve one good purpose: They distinguish those who are faithful and true in God's sight. (CSB)

The divisions, though sad, made clear who was following apostolic teaching and who was not. (TLSB)

From these reports of disunity in the communal gatherings Paul can only conclude that the Corinthians have completely lost sight of what it means that their gatherings are for the purpose of receiving the Lord's Supper (11:20). Their behavior is not at all in keeping with the Supper's significance as the Lord's sacred testament and gracious gift to all his people. After all, just as there is only one Baptism into one body and one Spirit (1:10–17; 12:13), so also there cannot be many suppers, a different one for each faction. There can only be the one Supper, which the one Master has instituted for all his servants. (CC)

11:20 *not the Lord's Supper that you eat.* Their intention was to eat the Lord's Supper, but it was profaned by their gluttony and discrimination. (CSB)

By creating divisions, the Corinthians demonstrated that they were not intending to celebrate the Lord's Supper according to Christ's institution, but as a meal for the host and his favored guests. This did not invalidate the Supper, but it did contradict the Gospel. The result was judgment (vv 29–32). (TLSB)

But the Corinthians were destroying the holy character of the Supper by their selfishness and individualism. It was no longer “the *Lord's Supper*” (11:20) that was the highlight of their gatherings. Rather, each person's chief interest had become “*his own supper*” (11:21). (CC)

It seems that in the Corinthian church the celebration of the Lord's Supper accompanied a communal meal known as the ἀγάπη (“love feast”; cf. Jude 12 and some manuscripts of 2 Pet 2:13). While we cannot be certain of the order of events, it seems plausible that just as the Lord originally instituted his Supper toward the end and as the climax of the Passover meal, so the early Christians began their gatherings with a common meal climaxing in the celebration of the Sacrament. (CC)

11:21 *goes hungry ... gets drunk.* The early church held the *agape* (“love”) feast in connection with the Lord's Supper (cf. 2Pe 2:13; Jude 12). Perhaps the meal was something like a present-day potluck dinner. In good Greek style they brought food for all to share, the rich bringing more and the poor less, but because of their cliques the rich ate much and the poor were left hungry. (CSB)

The wealthy ate the best food and wine to excess, without leaving any for those in the outer rooms.

meal. A community meal was shared by the Corinthians when they celebrated the Lord's Supper. (TLSB)

11:22 *houses to eat and drink in?* Or, “houses for this eating and drinking.”

church. Not a building but those who belong to God by faith. (TLSB)

those who have nothing. Those of lower status who were excluded from the main meal. (TLSB)

But the conduct of some of the Corinthians at the common meal was making a farce of the whole celebration (1 Cor 11:21). The wealthier members of the church, who provided most of the food,

did not have the patience and courtesy to wait for the day laborers and slaves who would arrive later in the evening. Rather, they went ahead with their own meals. What could have been a marvelous opportunity for them to share with their less fortunate brothers and sisters was lost, as they freely indulged, in some cases to the point of drunkenness (11:21). By the time many of the poorer members arrived there was little or nothing left. The poor may thus have missed out on the Eucharist itself. (CC)

It is likely, too, that on these occasions the wealthy members were physically separated from the poor. They would dine with the host in the main dining room, the triclinium, where in a typical house there was space for about nine to twelve guests to recline at table. Here the host would entertain members of his own high social class. In plain view of the festivities in the triclinium, the other guests would be seated on couches in the atrium, a courtyard area with seating for about forty people. These lower-status guests were often served inferior food and wine.¹⁴ Thus it seems that the culture of Roman Corinth was setting the agenda for the church's practice. The poor, who constituted the majority of the congregation (1:26–31), were being treated as second-class members of the church. (CC)

The time has come for those who had humiliated others to be humiliated themselves. With two rhetorical questions in 11:22, Paul addresses the rich as if to say: “Surely it’s not the case that you rich people don’t have private homes for your eating and drinking? Or do you look down your noses at the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing?” The apostle’s sharp reproof of the wealthy is reminiscent of James 2:6 (“you have dishonored the poor man”). It needs to be given an attentive hearing again in our modern culture, where the influence of “prosperity doctrine” has led many Christians to regard the poor as “trash.” Paul reminds the affluent of all ages that the church does not belong to them, but to God, who will always have a special place for the poorer saints, choosing them to be “rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom he has promised to those who love him” (James 2:5). Paul had begun his epistle on a similar note: “But God chose the foolish things of the world so that he might humiliate the wise people, and God chose the weak things of the world so that he might humiliate the strong things, and God chose the lowly things of the world and the despised things—the things that are not—so that he might reduce to nothing the things that exist, so that no one might boast in the presence of God” (1 Cor 1:27–29). (CC)

11:23–26 Observe the similarity of Paul’s words here with Mt 26:26–29; Mk 14:22–25; and especially Lk 22:17–20. (CSB)

It is beyond the scope of this commentary to provide an extensive comparison of Paul’s account of the Words of Institution of the Lord’s Supper with the parallels in the synoptic gospels. It must suffice here to say this: (1) Despite some minor differences between the four accounts, they are very similar in the essentials. (2) Matthew and Mark represent one distinct form of the tradition, while Paul and Luke represent another. (3) The two most significant differences are as follows: First, in the cup saying, Matthew (26:28) and Mark (14:24) read “this is my blood of the testament,” while Paul (1 Cor 11:25) and Luke (22:20) have “this cup is the new testament in my blood.” Second, Paul (1 Cor 11:24, 25) and Luke (22:19) have the injunction “keep doing this in my memory.” With regard to this injunction, whereas it appears only after the bread in Luke (22:19), Paul records it not only in connection with the bread but also with the cup (1 Cor 11:24, 25). Moreover, Paul adds 11:26 about how the communicants are to remember the Lord by proclaiming his death until he comes. Thus Paul places special emphasis on the theme of the Lord’s Supper as remembrance (ἀνάμνησις, “memory,” 11:24–25) of Christ. As one commentator suggests, this is in keeping with his present concerns:

By their going ahead with their own private meal [11:21], and thereby humiliating the “have-nots,” the wealthy have also apparently lost touch with the meaning of the Supper itself. The words of institution are repeated to remind them of why they celebrate such a meal in the first place, a reason that goes back to Jesus himself. They do this to “remember him” in a special way, namely to “proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.” Their actions are obviously not in keeping with the essence of that proclamation. (CC)

11:23 *I received from the Lord.*† Paul does not necessarily mean that he received the message about the Lord’s Supper directly from Christ. The information probably was passed on to him by others who had heard it from Jesus. Paul is emphasizing that the sanctity of the Supper rests on the authority of the Lord himself. (CSB)

Not by direct revelation, but through the passing on of the teachings of Christ through the apostles. (TLSB)

on the night when He was betrayed. The Lord’s Supper looks back to its institution by Jesus Himself, which was based on His sacrifice on the cross the following day. (TLSB)

Took bread. An emphatic ἐγώ, “I” (1 Cor 11:23), introduces Paul’s account of the Words of Institution of the Lord’s Supper. In contrast to the Corinthians’ misunderstandings and abuses, their father in the faith (4:15) is about to set out the directions for the Meal which he has personally received from the Lord. (CC)

Twice in 11:23 Paul reminds them with ὁ κύριος, “the Lord,” that it is not *their own* private meal they are celebrating, but the *Lord’s* Supper (contrast 11:20–21). So the Lord’s directions for its celebration must be accepted without question (see ὁ κύριος, “the Lord,” also in 11:26, 27 [twice], 32; and also see the Lord’s commands in 7:10; 9:14; 14:37). (CC)

The Lord’s Supper is not the property of the individual Christian. It is not the Christian’s feelings, thoughts, opinions, views, or even theology, which decides what the Lord’s Supper is. Such misunderstandings come from Schleiermacher’s view of the church (see Elert, *Eucharist and Church Fellowship*, 2). Charles Porterfield Krauth expressed it well: “Christ is the centre of the [Evangelical] system, and in the Supper is the centre of Christ’s revelation of Himself. The glory and mystery of the incarnation combine there as they combine nowhere else. Communion with Christ is that by which we live, and the Supper is ‘the Communion.’ ” *The Conservative Reformation and Its Theology* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1963), 655. (CC)

The solemnity and poignancy of the events on that first Maundy Thursday evening stand in stark contrast to the Corinthians’ irreverent celebrations.

In the midst of the Passover meal, the Lord took a loaf of unleavened bread, “a thin, flat cake of bread,” probably similar to what we know as “Peter bread” or Lebanese bread. This action and the subsequent actions of giving thanks, breaking, and distributing the bread remind us of the way he hosted the feeding of the five thousand (Mk 6:41). (CC)

Because the Lord’s Supper was instituted during a Passover meal (Lk 22:7–13), Jesus would have blessed unleavened bread (Ex 12:14–20). (TLSB)

11:24 *had given thanks.* The Jewish practice at meals. This makes it a true Eucharist (“thanksgiving”). (CSB)

The breaking of the bread parallels the sacrificial “breaking” of Christ’s body on the cross. “ ‘When the Word is joined to the element or natural substance, it becomes a Sacrament.’ This saying of St. Augustine is so properly and so well put that he has scarcely said anything better. The Word must make a Sacrament out of the element, or else it remains a mere element. Now, it is not the word or ordinance of a prince or emperor. But it is the Word of the grand Majesty, at whose feet all creatures should fall and affirm it is as He says, and accept it with all reverence, fear, and humility” (LC V 10–11). (TLSB)

my body. Though “is” or “was” might be used metaphorically elsewhere (e.g., 10:4), 10:16 and 11:27 make clear that in the receiving of the sacramental bread, one also receives the very body of Christ. Luther: “It is the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ under the bread and wine” (SC, Sacrament of the Altar, p xli). (TLSB)

Jesus’ words over the bread are unambiguous: “This [bread] is my body, which is for you” (1 Cor 11:24). His words over the wine are equally simple (11:25). With the speaking of the powerful Words of Institution, the bread is no longer simply bread, the wine no longer simply wine. Rather, “it [the Sacrament of the Altar] is the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, under the bread and wine” (SC VI 2). Thus these words may not be changed or trifled with. All attempts to avoid a realistic understanding by reinterpreting the verb ἐστίν, “is,” to mean “signify” or “represent,” as if the Communion elements merely symbolized Christ’s absent realities, fly in the face of the plain meaning. The Lord is identifying the bread as his body and the wine as his blood. He employs a figure of speech known as synecdoche, by which a part is put for the whole.²⁰ “The cup” which Jesus blessed and which “he gave to them” (Mt 26:27; Mk 14:23) refers not only to the cup itself but especially to the wine it contains, which he identifies as his blood. A similar example of synecdoche is when a person shows a purse or wallet and says, “This is money.” Although you only see a wallet or purse, it actually contains the person’s money. More important than the purse is the money it contains. So with the Lord’s Supper, the Lord’s body, which is “in and under” the bread, is the more important part of the whole (the bread and his body). Likewise with the cup that contains the wine that is Christ’s blood, his blood is the most important part. (CC)

To stick with the Lord’s words “this is” (1 Cor 11:24) does not mean to adopt a philosophical theory like transubstantiation or consubstantiation. It simply means taking the words as they stand. It simply means to say: “With the bread we also receive the body.” Because of the sacramental union, the bread and the body are not two distinct substances (as in the theory of consubstantiation). Rather, they have become “flesh bread or body bread,” just as the wine and blood are now “blood wine.” (CC)

The sacramental bread conveys the Lord’s body given in sacrifice “for you” (11:24). The preposition ὑπέρ (“for”) is regularly used in contexts which speak of Christ’s vicarious atonement. The Sacrament is a highly visible and tangible form of the Gospel. It confers on the believer the benefits of Christ’s vicarious suffering and death. (CC)

Jesus then commands the disciples to continue celebrating the Sacrament: “Keep doing this” (11:24, 25). In this way, the church will have a perpetual memorial of her Savior. The annual Passover celebration in the first month of the year, with the slaughter of the lambs and all the attendant rituals, served as a powerful reminder to Israel of the Lord’s redemption of his people from Egyptian bondage (Ex 12:14). By participating in the Passover meal, the people were made beneficiaries of the redemption event, and so even later generations could say that they celebrate the Passover because “the Lord brought *us* out of Egypt” (Ex 13:14, 16). Similarly, the repeated celebration of the Lord’s Supper reminds the saints of the new and greater “exodus” their Savior

had accomplished in Jerusalem (Lk 9:31). This remembering of the crucified and living Lord, who is physically present and whose body and blood truly are received orally in the Eucharist, is not merely a mental activity such as we engage in when we consider other historical figures. Rather, the crucified and living Christ truly comes to us here, presenting himself—his body and blood—in the bread and the wine. To remember him, then, does not primarily require mental effort, but God-given “wisdom,” “fear of the Lord,” “faith.” That wisdom and faith rest upon the words of Jesus himself! And that faith can only be created and inspired by God, who makes “his wonderful deeds to be remembered” (Ps 111:4). (CC)

Paul began his epistle by saying that the Gospel itself is foolishness according to the world’s way of thinking, but God’s “foolishness” is wiser than the world’s wisdom (1 Cor 1:18–25). So, too, the doctrine that Christ’s body and blood are really present with the bread and wine may seem like foolishness to some, but Christ’s words have the power to accomplish what they say. Like “the word of the cross,” Christ’s Words of Institution are “the power of God” to those “who are being saved” (1:18). (CC)

for you. The benefits of Christ’s sacrifice on the cross are delivered to His people in the Sacrament. (TLSB)

in remembrance of me. Not merely a memorial of what Jesus did on the cross, the Lord’s Supper brings the benefits of Christ’s work into the present day and transforms lives now. (TLSB)

The background to the phrase “in my memory” (11:24, 25) is undoubtedly the Hebrew לְזָכְרוֹן, found in the original Passover account in Ex 12:14: “This day shall be for you *a memorial day* [לְזָכְרוֹן], and you shall celebrate it as a feast of the Lord throughout your generations; you shall celebrate it as an ordinance forever.” The Hebrew phrase is also found in Ex 13:9, a similar passage. For the people of Israel, this remembering of the exodus and Passover was far more real and vivid than any merely mental recollection of events from an increasingly remote past. The first Passover may have happened “yesterday” or yesteryear, but for each new generation it was happening afresh “today.” Here lies the Israelite sense of their nation as one “corporate personality,”³¹ with past, present, and future generations all bound together as one people sharing the same blessed redemption. (CC)

Especially does this become apparent in Deut 5:2–4: “The Lord our God made a covenant *with us* in Horeb. *Not with our fathers* did the Lord make this covenant, *but with us, who are, all of us, here alive this day.* The Lord spoke *with you* [plural] face to face at the mountain, out of the midst of the fire.” Von Rad comments: “The divine revelation on Sinai is not something in the past, a matter of history so far as the present generation to whom it is addressed is concerned. It is a present reality, determining the way of life of the very same people who receive it. . . . Within the framework of the cultus . . . past, present, and future acts of God coalesce in the one tremendous actuality of the faith.” (CC)

In the light of the OT background, Brunner has demonstrated that “the celebration of Holy Communion as a whole is an anamnesis,” an “effective *repraesentatio*” (“re-presentation”) of the salvation event accomplished in Jerusalem. Just as a prophetic sign in the OT “effectively release[d] the happening indicated in it” (e.g., Jeremiah 19; Ezekiel 4 and 5; and the Passover itself), so Holy Communion is “a ‘commemorative’ sign, which, in the sign, keeps the past vividly present,” and by virtue of the powerful Words of Institution makes the body and the blood of Christ real and effective *for you*. As Otto explained: “With, in, and under the celebration of the Lord’s Supper, Golgotha becomes event here and now—not through our imagining, but through

Jesus' institution."³⁶ So Brunner concludes: "Holy Communion is the opposite of a festival commemorating a dead man! It is a meal fellowship with Him who lives, and who, by reason of His resurrection victory, is actually present among His followers through the administration of Holy Communion." (CC)

11:25 *after supper*. After the Passover supper. The Lord's Supper was first celebrated by Jesus in connection with the Passover meal (cf. Mt 26:18–30 and parallels in Mark and Luke). (CSB)

the cup. † The old covenant was the Mosaic or Sinaitic covenant; see Ex 24:3–8.) By the use of this covenant sign God signifies his bestowal of salvation upon his people, sealed and paid for by the shedding of Jesus' blood, and available through this sacrament. (CSB)

One of several cups of wine used ceremonially at a Passover meal. "Cup" here stands for the wine. (TLSB)

Jesus' second action in instituting the Lord's Supper, the blessing and distribution of the cup (1 Cor 11:25), seems to have taken place at some interval after his action with the bread. In the meantime the disciples would have eaten the sacramental bread and (in view of the phrase "after the supper" in 11:25) completed the remaining courses of the meal. Now, in the same manner as he took the bread and gave thanks, Jesus took the cup and presumably gave thanks over it as well. This was probably the third cup of the Passover meal, the "cup of blessing." (CC)

As has been noted, the Words of Institution at this point in Paul and Luke ("this cup is the new testament in my blood," 1 Cor 11:25 and Lk 22:20) vary from Matthew and Mark's "this is my blood of the testament which is poured out for many" (Mt 26:28; Mk 14:24; Matthew adds "for the forgiveness of sins"). But there is no substantial difference in meaning. Whereas the version in Matthew and Mark provides a neater parallel with the saying over the bread, Paul and Luke's version gives slightly greater prominence to the theme of the new testament which is sealed and ratified by the blood of Christ. This new testament supersedes the old testament, which God ratified with the Israelites by having Moses sprinkle them with the blood of oxen (Ex 24:8). Now the new testament "is ratified, confirmed, and sealed" by the blood of Christ. This blood confers on the believer the gift of the new testament, the forgiveness of sins (cf. Jer 31:31–34; Mt 26:28; Heb 8:12; 1 Jn 1:7). (CC)

new covenant in My blood. To this cup, Jesus gives new significance. The old covenant, made explicit to Abraham, then Israel, is now made complete and perfect in Christ's sacrificial death because it delivers the forgiveness of sins (Jer 31:31–34; Mt 26:28). Whereas the previous covenant celebrated a Passover meal, the new covenant celebrates the Lord's Supper. "There are two things in a Sacrament: a sign and the Word. In the New Testament, the Word is the promise of grace added. The promise of the New Testament is the promise of the forgiveness of sins" (Ap XXIV 69). (TLSB)

11:26 *as often as you eat...drink*. The Lord's Supper should be held periodically, but there is no explicit instruction as to how often. (CSB)

Jesus left no specific instruction as to the frequency of the celebration. Though the Passover was celebrated yearly, early Christians celebrated the Lord's Supper on the Lord's Day, i.e., Sunday, the day of Christ's resurrection. "For Christ did not say, 'Omit this' or 'Despise this,' but 'This do, as often as you drink it,' etc. He most certainly wants it done and does not want it left undone and despised" (SC, Preface, p xxxiv). (TLSB)

In view of the solemn circumstances under which the Lord instituted his Supper, and the precious gifts conferred through that meal, it is totally inappropriate for the Corinthians' churchly gatherings to be marked by reveling and drunkenness (1 Cor 11:21). Rather, whenever they gather to drink the Lord's cup, it should be with sober recollection of its original setting on the night when Jesus was handed over by his Father and with quiet thankfulness for the forgiveness of sins, which is conferred through his blood. (CC)

For the Sacrament proclaims "the death of the Lord" (11:26). As one commentary says, "the Eucharist is an *acted* sermon, an *acted* proclamation of the death which it commemorates." By their whole action in gathering for the Sacrament, hearing the Words of Institution, and eating and drinking the sacramental elements, members of the Christian community proclaim "Jesus Christ and him crucified" (2:2) for their sins (cf. 1:18; 15:3). The Sacrament is truly "the pulpit of the laity" ("die Kanzel der Laien"). (CC)

Not only does the Lord's Supper look back to the Lord's crucifixion, but it also looks forward to his final coming. As Thiselton notes, the reveling Corinthians seem to have forgotten this eschatological aspect of the Supper. Thinking they had already arrived (4:8), they regarded Holy Communion as "feasting at the eschatological banquet of the Messiah." Throughout the epistle Paul must remind them of the interim character of the Christian life, which will always be lived in the tension between the now and the not yet. Indeed, the epistle is framed by this eschatological perspective: the introduction includes the reminder that we still "await the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1:7); the conclusion includes the prayer *μαράνα θά*, "maranatha," "our Lord, come" (16:22; cf. Mt 26:29; Rev 22:20). (CC)

Like the OT people of God, his saints in the NT era live as those who are "on the way." Redeemed from the Egypt of their sins, they walk with "loins girded" and "lamps burning," watching and praying as they await their Master's coming (Lk 12:35–36; cf. 1 Pet 1:13). As those who look forward to the parousia, they are challenged to be a different kind of people: "Since all these things will be dissolved, what kind of people should you be?" (2 Pet 3:11). Not only are they to appropriate the Sacrament in faith for their own benefit, but they should also let that faith express itself in loving service to others, particularly the church's needier members (1 Cor 11:21). That concern is expressed by the post-Communion prayer: "Strengthen us through the same in faith toward you, and in fervent love toward one another." (CC)

you proclaim. Not a public setting with guests or visitors, but an act of proclaiming among themselves and to every generation that, in the Sacrament, they also shared in the new covenant. The "you" is plural; again, what should have been a celebration and proclamation of the unity created by Christ had broken down into an opportunity for individual indulgence. (TLSB)

until he comes. Cf. Mt 26:29. (CSB)

The Lord's Supper does not merely look back, but it also looks forward to the feast in the presence of the Lord on the Last Day (Mt 26:29). (TLSB)

11:27–32 Paul describes the implications of Jesus' institution for the situation in Corinth. (TLSB)

11:27 *therefore.* The strong inferential conjunction *ὥστε* ("so," 1 Cor 11:27) links this paragraph tightly to the preceding account of the institution of the Lord's Supper (11:23–26). Everything Paul is about to say concerning the guilt of the Corinthians follows from the Words of Institution: "This is my body. ... This cup is the new testament in my blood" (11:24–25). (CC)

in an unworthy manner.† As vv. 28–29 indicate, the unworthiness is impenitence, as well as unbelief regarding the sanctity and significance of the sacrament. (CSB)

Includes celebrating the Sacrament in a manner that is inconsistent with Jesus’ institution, particularly the creation of divisions. It also includes not recognizing what is given and received in the “body and blood.” Were Paul discussing exclusively the Church as the Body of Christ, there would have been no mention of the blood. However, eating and drinking in an unworthy manner also includes not recognizing the sacramental presence of Christ’s body and blood (cf v 29). (TLSB)

Paul proceeds to issue a solemn warning of the dire consequences of unworthy eating. By unworthy eating he has in mind the type of behavior described in 11:20–22 and 11:29–30. Many of the Corinthians were sinning against faith and love. They were sinning against faith by their failure to discern that in the Sacrament they were receiving the body and blood of Christ (11:29–30). And they were sinning against love in not showing consideration for the poor and needy (11:20–22). What Paul said about the arrogant Christians in 8:12 is equally true here: by sinning against weak and lowly Christians, “you are sinning *against Christ*.” To eat the bread and drink the cup in this manner is to be unworthy of the food offered in the Supper. (CC)

The Corinthians’ sin against the Lord’s body and blood was tantamount to the sin of the soldiers, Pilate, Judas, and the Jewish leaders in murdering Jesus. In fact, those Corinthians were “crucifying the Son of God afresh” (Heb 6:6) by their unworthy eating and drinking (cf. Heb 10:29). (CC)

Flowing as it does from the Words of Institution, the final clause of 1 Cor 11:27 confirms that by the very act of the eating of the bread and wine in the Lord’s Supper, the communicant orally receives Christ’s body and blood. The Lord’s body and blood are bound up with the elements by virtue of the sacramental union. (CC)

Another implication must also be drawn: the unworthy eater, no less than the worthy recipient, actually receives Christ’s body and blood. A person’s lack of faith does not alter the fact that the gifts of Christ’s body and blood are offered and received in the Sacrament. But a lack of faith or a failure to acknowledge that Christ’s body and blood are present does prevent a *worthy* reception and draws down God’s judgment (11:29–30). For the unbeliever as for the believer, the sacramental bread is the Lord’s true body, and the cup is his true blood. “The unworthy, who do not eat spiritually, nevertheless do eat the body of Christ.”¹⁸ The fact that Christ’s body and blood are present rests entirely on the power of Christ’s words; it does not depend on the pastor who distributes the Supper or on the person who receives it. (CC)

Closed Communion

Because the unworthy recipient actually receives Christ’s body and blood to his harm (1 Cor 11:27–30), the church has traditionally recognized the need for pastors and congregations not to admit everyone indiscriminately to Holy Communion. Since this is “the *Lord’s Supper*,” it must be administered according to *his* institution and instructions. Whereas Christ “delivered his sermons to the multitude,” he only celebrated the Sacrament with his closest disciples; following our Lord’s practice, “we are not to cast the Sacrament among the people in a crowd.” A careless “open Communion” policy should be avoided. The church should equally avoid an unloving rigor which denies the Sacrament “to anyone to whom Christ wants it to be given.” (CC)

A careful exegesis of 1 Cor 10:14–22 yields the following implications for the church’s Communion practice:

1. Christians ... cannot and must not participate in non-Christian worship services. (CC)
2. By inference, non-Christians must not participate in the celebration of the Christian Lord’s Supper. (CC)
3. The realities involved in the Eucharist are not created or altered by the attitude and/or faith of those who are eating and drinking. The cup and bread *are* the participation in the blood and body of Christ [1 Cor 10:16]. In a similar manner, when false gods are invoked, and sacrifice offered to them, the demons with their reality are present, even if an individual Christian is there as participant [10:20–21]. (CC)
4. To speak of “individuals” communing with their Lord in the Eucharist can lead to a serious misunderstanding. For the participation in Christ’s body and blood, through eating and drinking, necessarily involves the individual with those with whom he or she is communing [see especially 10:16–17]. (CC)

Four additional exegetical conclusions may be drawn from 11:17–34. These are that (5) failure to discern the body is unworthy eating; (6) pastoral supervision is needed in determining who should be admitted to the Supper; (7) divisions within the local congregation may require that some Christians be excluded from the Supper; and (8) differences between denominations may require that some Christians be excluded from the Supper. These conclusions are discussed under the following four subheads. (CC)

Failure to “Discern the Body” Is Unworthy Eating (11:27, 29)

Christians should not commune if they would do so “in an unworthy manner” (ἀνάξιως, 11:27). Such unworthy communing calls down the judgment of God, which can result in various afflictions (11:29–30), even if those afflictions are to be seen as God’s fatherly chastening, rather than as preludes to eternal condemnation (11:32). (CC)

The key to communing in a worthy manner is the ability and willingness to “discern the body” [11:29]. ... It consists of repentance and faith, and these move in two directions at the same time. Repentance applies to sin committed against God in general, the vertical dimension. But owing to the corporate character of the Sacrament, such repentance also applies specifically and especially to one’s relationship to fellow communicants, the horizontal dimension. One who communes “worthily” acknowledges the importance of preserving a unity with fellow communicants and is willing to do what is needed to remove any fracture or division in that unity. (CC)

More specific aspects of communing “unworthily” are explained by Gibbs:

Paul teaches that to commune unworthily means three things. First, unworthy communing takes place when Christians commune while abusing the horizontal relationship between Christians, or when that abuse is ignored and tolerated. Second, unworthy communing takes place when the Sacrament’s very purpose—to sustain the unity of the members of the one body—is also ignored. Third, unworthy communing occurs when the reality of Christ’s body and blood in the Sacrament are overtly or implicitly denied. (CC)

That third point rests on the interpretation that “body” (σῶμα) in the phrase “discerning the body” (11:29) refers to the sacramental body of Christ, which is present with the bread that is eaten in

the Lord's Supper. Several factors support that traditional interpretation.²⁷ The only other occurrences of "the body" in the chapter are in references to Christ's sacramental body. The first occurrence in the context is in Christ's Words of Institution in 11:24, "this is *my body* [τοῦτό μου ἔστιν τὸ σῶμα]." The second and only other occurrence of "body" in the chapter (besides its occurrence in 11:29) is in Paul's description of the main problem in the church in Corinth: many were "guilty of sinning against *the body and the blood* of the Lord" (11:27). The inclusion of the Lord's "blood" alongside of his "body" in 11:27 requires that "body" in 11:27 (as also in 11:24 and 11:29) must refer to the body of Christ given and eaten together with the bread in the Sacrament. If "body" in 11:27 were interpreted metaphorically to refer only to the church, to what could the Lord's "blood" refer? The church is never called Christ's blood. (CC)

There is a tight relationship between the three verses 11:27, 28, and 29. The problem is stated in 11:27; the remedy for the problem is found in the exhortation in 11:28; and 11:29 states the reason why Christians must heed the exhortation in 11:28 and so avoid committing the grievous sin described in 11:27. The cohesiveness of Paul's argumentation in 11:27–29 requires that "body" must refer to the sacramental body of Christ in 11:29 as well as in 11:27. (CC)

guilty. Abusing the Sacrament by making it an occasion for sin, not for its intended purpose of forgiveness and unity makes one guilty and liable to judgment (vv 29–32). "Those who go to the Sacrament [Lord's Supper] unworthily yet still receive the true Sacrament, even though they do not believe" (LC IV 54). (TLSB)

11:28 examine himself.† A person should test the attitude of his own heart and actions and his awareness of the significance of the Supper, thus making the Supper, under God, a means of grace. (CSB)

To see whether or not the person is receiving the Sacrament according to Christ's institution, not in an "unworthy manner" (see note, v 27). This does not require a perfect, sinless life before reception of the Sacrament but a desire to receive the blessings of the Sacrament, including forgiveness and being formed with fellow recipients as the Body of Christ. Paul illustrates pastoral oversight in the examination by rebuking their sin and returning them to their catechesis (v 23). "Confession in the churches is not abolished among us. The body of the Lord is not usually given to those who have not been examined [1 Corinthians 11:27–28] and absolved" (AC XXV 1; see also LC V 49–50). (TLSB)

"Let a Person Examine Himself" (11:28)

In order not to incur this serious guilt, each believer should examine himself before he eats from the bread and drinks from the cup. To understand what Paul may have in mind by his call for self-examination, we may compare these passages: "Test yourselves to see whether you are in the faith. Examine yourselves" (2 Cor 13:5). And "let each person examine his own work" (Gal 6:4). The latter verse comes from a context which speaks of Christian love ("bear one another's burdens," Gal 6:2). Thus Paul is calling on the Corinthians to check the sincerity of their faith and the depth of their love for one another, in light of the abuses that have come to his attention. (CC)

In its immediate context, the call for the Christian who would commune to "examine himself" (1 Cor 11:28) is intended to prevent the damage that is done to a Christian who eats and drinks judgment upon himself, sinning against the Lord's body and blood (11:27) because he fails to "discern the body" (11:29). The Christian who would commune must examine whether he discerns "the body" (11:29), since failure to discern the body is what incurs God's judgment.

Based on a careful study of 11:28 in this context, three main dimensions of this self-examination seem to be required. (CC)

First, the communicant must examine himself by asking whether he believes that Christ's physical body and blood are present together with the bread and wine which he will eat and drink. Faith in this true presence rests on Christ's own words, "this is my body" (11:24) and "this ... is ... my blood" (11:25). An affirmation of this real presence "is a *sine qua non* for all discussion of Paul's theology and understanding of the Lord's Supper." Second, self-examination should discover faith in and desire for the benefits of the Lord's Supper, which are given according to the Lord's own promise. Chief among these benefits is "the forgiveness of sins" (Mt 26:28), and so self-examination should reveal an awareness of one's own sin and need for forgiveness. A third fruit of self-examination may be gleaned from Paul's emphasis in 1 Corinthians 10–11 on the unity of the body of Christ as the members of his body commune together, partaking of the one loaf (1 Cor 10:17). "All who commune must examine themselves and through repentance and faith they must find the divinely-created willingness to remove divisions and to preserve unity with fellow communicants." This will include the resolve to amend one's own life for the sake of the church's unity and witness to Christ. (CC)

All three of those aspects of self-examination are intertwined. "A right perception of the presence of Christ's body and blood in the Eucharist will necessarily entail a right perception of one's relationship to fellow communicants," and it will also entail a right perception of one's relationship to God through Christ's crucified body and his blood shed for the forgiveness of sins. (CC)

While self-examination should include these aspects, "Paul is not demanding perfection before believers are allowed to come to Communion." It is regrettable that pietists have often understood 1 Cor 11:28–32 as if the purpose of self-examination would be to make it possible by one's own efforts to raise one's level of sanctification and thus become worthy of the Supper. On the contrary, the worthy recipient is the one who recognizes his unworthiness, his great deficiency in faith and love, and who thus hungers and thirsts for forgiveness, trusting Christ's promise (Mt 26:28) that the forgiveness of sins comes with the reception of Christ's body and blood in the Sacrament. The arrogant and skeptical Corinthians, on the other hand, were unworthy precisely because they were so full of themselves and their spiritual attainments. (CC)

Should the Sacrament Be Offered to Children?

The Lutheran church has traditionally used 1 Cor 11:28 ("let a person examine himself") as the basis for its practice of not offering Holy Communion to children. Pieper comments on this text: "Scripture expressly declares spiritual self-examination necessary for a salutary use of the Holy Supper. ... Excluded therefore are children." In recent years, however, the question of whether the Sacrament should be offered to children at an earlier age, and even to infants, has been the subject of vigorous debate. (CC)

Two observations may be made. First, the meaning of δοκιμάζω, "examine" (11:28), cannot be reduced to merely the equivalent of μετανοέω, "repent," or πιστεύω, "believe, have faith." The verb δοκιμάζω, "examine," in 1 Jn 4:1 involves the intellect, or theological acumen: "Test the spirits, whether they are from God." Such testing or self-examination would not be possible for infants or very young children (or, for example, for an unconscious or comatose person). Second, while it may be possible to draw inferences from 1 Cor 11:27–32 regarding the communing of children, it needs to be recognized that this falls outside Paul's immediate purview. Luther commented: "When in I Corinthians [11:28] Paul said that a man should examine himself, he spoke only of adults because he was speaking about those [adults] who were quarreling among

themselves. However, he doesn't here forbid that the sacrament of the altar be given even to children." Presumably Luther meant children who had been sufficiently instructed so as to recognize that the Lord's body and blood are given with the bread and wine, and to be able to examine themselves. (CC)

The variations in this aspect of Communion practice over the centuries have been well documented in recent articles. Any changes to current practice should only be introduced on the basis of thorough study, with pastors and congregations taking care that "all things be done properly and in order" (1 Cor 14:40), and that any moves to commune younger children not be introduced at the expense of proper catechesis. (CC)

11:29 *without discerning the body of the Lord.*† The word "body" may refer to either the Lord's physical body or the church as the body of Christ (see 12:13, 27). The first view means that the person partakes of the Lord's Supper without recognizing that it is Christ's body. The second view means that the participant is not aware of the nature of the church as the body of Christ, resulting in the self-centered actions of vv. 20–21. (CSB)

Short for "body and blood" used throughout this section. Note parallels at vv 27–28. "Discerning" includes recognizing the "true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ under the bread and wine" (SC, Sacrament of the Altar, p xli). It also implies a desire for the "forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation" offered in the Sacrament. Finally, in the context of vv 17–34, it also includes a desire to end the human divisions that destroy the unity of the Body of Christ created through the Sacrament. (TLSB)

The Body and the Church (11:29)

With the particle γάρ ("for," 11:29), Paul provides another of his "little hooks" which link the verse to the preceding context. Paul has asked the Corinthians to examine themselves (11:28) before eating and drinking the Sacrament because he does not want them to eat and drink judgment on themselves. And this will surely happen if one "does not discern the body" (11:29), or as Chrysostom paraphrases, if the communicants eat and drink "without recognizing, as is necessary, the greatness of the things that lie before them." These holy gifts are not to be despised or trifled with. (CC)

Some commentators deny that σῶμα, "body," in 11:29 refers to Christ's body in the Sacrament. They point instead to Paul's use of the term in 10:17 to designate Christ's mystical "body," the church. After all, they maintain, the overt sin in Corinth was the rift in the church between the prosperous and the poor in connection with the sacramental celebration. As has been argued above,⁵² the basic problem with a one-sided interpretation of σῶμα here as the mystical body, the church, is that it does not do justice to the immediate context, the Words of Institution, and the "little hooks" which lead from those significant words to the text under consideration. A case can be made, however, that σῶμα in 11:29 may, in addition to its primary reference to Christ's physical body in the Sacrament, have an echo of its meaning further away in the wider context, where it refers to the church (10:17; 12:12–27). (CC)

judgment. Not God's eternal judgment, which is to come on the unbeliever, but such disciplinary judgment as physical sickness and death (v. 30). (CSB)

Not everyone who was participating in the sacramental meal in Corinth was condemned—only those who did not discern the body and so came under God's judgment (vv 31–32). "The pastors do not force those who are not qualified to use the Sacraments" (Ap XI 62). (TLSB)

11:30 The same food that should have strengthened their faith instead caused physical harm. The effect of benefit to one person and curse to another is similar to the way Paul describes the Gospel itself (2Co 2:14–16). Physical punishment follows spiritual problems, just as it did for Israel (10:1–13). (TLSB)

many of you are weak and ill. Paul now spells out the consequences of the Corinthians' abuse of the Sacrament for many in Corinth. As reported to him (possibly by the three-man delegation in 16:17 or by "Chloe's people," 1:11), an unusually large number of the Corinthians had fallen ill, and a considerable number had died. The spate of illnesses and deaths occurred despite the presence in the congregation of a number of people with gifts of healing (12:9). Paul interpreted the events as signs of a judgment from God on those who failed to discern the Lord's body in the Sacrament. The "medicine of immortality, the antidote we take in order not to die but to live forever in Jesus Christ,"⁵⁶ is designed to serve "as a pure, wholesome, soothing medicine which aids and quickens us in both soul and body." But this same wholesome medicine had instead proved harmful, even deadly, for those who despised it. (CC)

God's severe judgment on some of the Corinthians seems, indeed, to have been a special case, a timely warning to the Corinthians and to the young church at large. It does not mean there will always be similar physical consequences when the Sacrament is abused. At the same time, certainly it is a warning to the church of all ages that the Sacrament should not be taken lightly. To despise it brings God's judgment, even though the judgment may not manifest itself in the same way or come so quickly. (CC)

have died. A common first-century figure of speech for death. (CSB)

God's Discipline "So That We Will Not Be Condemned" (11:31–32)

Paul uses a softer tone in 11:31–32, speaking in the first person plural to include himself with the congregation. He first says, to paraphrase, "None of these judgments would have happened to us if we had been examining ourselves" (see Paul's command in 11:28). But then he adds in 11:32 that when we are faced with the reality of such judgments, we should not despair of God's grace. Rather, we should look on the events as "tokens of God's love," as the Lord's fatherly discipline to bring us to our senses and keep us from finally being condemned with the unbelieving world (cf. Heb 12:5–7, 10). (CC)

11:31–32 *judged.* Cf v 28; had proper examination taken place, the sufferings of the Corinthians would not have happened. " 'To judge' should be understood to include all of repentance and required fruit, not works that are not required" (Ap XIIB 66). Even in God's judgment (v 30), the goal is salvation. (TLSB)

11:32 *disciplined.* † As God's redeemed children we are disciplined—just as a human father disciplines his child—so that we might repent of our sins (cf. 2Co 7:10) and grow in our Christian life (2Pe 3:18; Heb 12:7–11). (CSB)

11:33–34 Application of the theological argumentation to the situation in Corinth. (TLSB)

Conclusion (11:33–34)

Addressing them pastorally again as "my brothers," Paul concludes his argument that the Sacrament should be held in proper reverence. There should be no more of the "disgraceful scramble" at the agape meal, whereby each person went ahead with his own private meal without a thought for those who could not be present until later. This self-centered behavior was marring the whole evening, to the degree that the Lord's Supper held in conjunction with the meal was no

longer worthy of the name (1 Cor 11:20); indeed, it was bringing the Lord's displeasure and judgment on the Corinthians (11:30–32). From now on, Paul says, they should wait for one another. Although the rich were the ones at fault, Paul delicately avoids mentioning anyone, but appeals to all. If anyone is so hungry that he cannot wait for others and share his food, then he should first satisfy his hunger at home. Thus Paul implies that there must be a clear distinction between the fellowship meal and the Lord's Supper,⁶³ a separation which became standard in the church. (CC)

Finally he adds that he will attend to other matters during his next visit (11:34). While the reader can only guess what these other matters may have been, it seems reasonable to suppose they were less important details connected in some way to the Lord's Supper. At this stage he is unable to say precisely when that next visit will be, although he will discuss his future plans in more detail in 16:5–8. (CC)

11:33 Paul reminds them to be considerate of one another (cf vv 21–22), welcoming “one another as Christ has welcomed you” (Rm 15:7). “Paul ... has this command ... so that there may be a common participation” (AC XXIV 39). (TLSB)

come together to eat. Another reference to the *agape* fellowship meal. Each person was to exercise restraint and wait to eat with the others. If a person was too hungry, he should satisfy his hunger at home and not bring selfish and discriminatory practices into the church. (CSB)

11:34 *eat at home.* The communal celebration of the Lord's Supper was not to focus on meeting the physical needs of the body; God's supply of daily bread was to be enjoyed at home (v 22; 10:25–26). (TLSB)

for judgment. To continue celebrating the Lord's Supper sinfully would have resulted in God's continuing judgment and, potentially, condemnation (vv 29–30). (TLSB)

other things. Not explained here; not as crucial as food sacrificed to idols (8:1–11:1), coverings in worship (11:2–16), and the celebration of the Lord's Supper. (TLSB)

directions. Paul will exercise pastoral care in person rather than through correspondence. (TLSB)

when I come. Paul suggests that they had other problems concerning the Lord's Supper that needed his attention, but he would take care of these later. (CSB)

Paul's future plans are described in 16:5–8. (TLSB)

11:17–34 The Corinthians have turned the Sacrament into a supper of their own making. As a result, the community of believers formed by the Gospel and the Sacrament is being harmed and individuals are falling under God's judgment. Recalling Christ's own institution of the Supper, Paul reminds the Corinthians to recognize what God has offered in the Sacrament: the body and blood of Christ, the forgiveness of sins, and through it the union of the Body of Christ, the Church, gathered around the altar. The Lord's Supper is never just a private matter, something only between God and oneself, but it is a celebration of the whole Body of Christ. • Forgive, O Lord, the dullness that too frequently overcomes us as You draw us to Your Table. Remind us of the blessings of forgiveness and salvation You provide for us there. Send faithful pastors who will admonish our wrongs, remind us of Your love in Christ, and encourage us to receive the

forgiveness brought to us in Your Sacrament. Unite us in love and fellowship with those whom You have redeemed who join us at Your Table. Amen. (TLSB)