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Eucharist and liturgical "conflict" in Corinth in the light of the text 1 Corinthians 11, 17-34

Thesis
Summary

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Key words:

conflict, Eucharist, mission, Church, community, meal, conscience, tension, Lord's Supper.

The context and argumentation of the paper:

The semantic sphere of the term „conflict” opens perspectives of approach that can generate meanings as diverse as they are difficult to capture and express in the complexity and diversity of their scope. Most of the time, the connotation of the term is a negative one, as man considers that a harmonious life should avoid disturbances arising from conflicts, of whatever nature they may be. Equally, it might be important to understand conflict as „a fact of life, sometimes destructive and harmful, sometimes constructive and beneficial”. Conflict can be challenging and, at the same time, generative of satisfying experiences. When successfully addressed, conflict promotes new ideas, embodies the ability to stimulate personal development and facilitate the identification of more effective solutions to problems, regardless of their nature.

Conflict is a natural and inevitable part of human life that cannot be eliminated, but can be managed and resolved constructively. Throughout human history, conflict has been a constant in all that is defined and expressed to be human activity and its various manifestations. Using the definition given by J. Hocker and W. Wilmontin, conflicts can be characterized as „struggles or competitions between people who have opposing needs, ideas, beliefs, values or goals”.

The etymology of the word can be found in the Latin „*conflictus*” (= clash of interests, contradiction of ideas). In the most suggestive way possible, we can paint the image of the conflict in the form of two stones that, by striking, generate a spark, triggering flame and fire. Under the ecclesial relationship, the divine, holy „fire” is the one that gives the spark to the Church, opening to each of its members the opportunity to grow and develop the relationship with God to the heights of the intimate union of the human creature with its Creator, in the reality of the Holy Mysteries, which, definitively, suggests the conflict between instinctual, immediate desire of the flesh to follow the divine call and reach the state of divinity, through grace. In line with the book of Proverbs (27, 17), „*Iron sharpens iron and one man sharpens another man's anger*”, conflict, when used to generate provocative sparks, can „sharpen” those involved in unsuspected directions, often unwanted. In a positive

perspective, the conflict opens up, for the Church, as we have already stated, a series of potentiating opportunities for spiritual growth and perfection.

From a sociological point of view, conflict is understood as an independent phenomenon in the dynamics of society, while theologically it has a different conceptualization, being a tool for achieving a specific goal. Conflict is, by definition, an antagonistic phenomenon, in which man wants, as a matter of principle, to seek a solution to a given situation. Christian values can guide how to perceive and respond to situations of conflict in reconciling terms, and at the same time, paradoxically, they can also involve a certain internal conflict, demanding for individual interests, often contradictory, in conflict.

In these terms, living the sacramental life involves a dual, coexisting dimension between immanence and transcendence, which gives the believer a deep reflection on how faith can be consistently expressed, especially in conflict situations. It is a natural process of the development of the spiritual life, expressed by the tension between what is already known and accepted, against everything that is new, innovative or not fully understood.

A good example and a paradigm of the Church for solving the future challenges of the Church can be found in the answer offered by Christ the Savior before the Apostles regarding the discovery of true greatness, in which „the least of all is the greatest” (Lk. 9, 46-48), a gesture by which he contradicted a whole set of values of the secularized world, in which mastery and domination over others comes first. Christ taught that in the Church you rise by serving others and by unconditional love towards your neighbour. This represented a significant paradigm shift and put the Church on a different axis from worldly interests, in the sense in which, through the internalized state of conflict, between the apparently natural intent of self-affirmation to the detriment of one’s neighbour or service to one’s neighbour, as a creature and image of God, can be detached as a final, redemptive objective, the latter to the detriment of the former.

In a society marked by tensions, conflicts and alienation from the values of the Holy Scriptures, we are called, now, perhaps more than ever, to be the element of balance, to „be able to transform the conflict into an opportunity to strengthen relationships, to preserve valuable resources and to make life a testimony of the love and power of Christ”. Such involvement and personal effort strengthen unity and community, in accordance with the Pauline exhortation: „*If possible, as far as is in your power, live in good peace with all men*” (Rom. 12, 18).

The objectives and purpose of the research:

The examination forays into the Pauline text of Epistle 1 to the Corinthians reveals to the reader, from the beginning, a reality that has its extension in the contemporary world: a differentiated socio-economic framework, multi-ethnic and multicultural, which leads spiritually to a heterogeneous religiosity. Confronting such situations, extremely delicate and unprecedented at the same time for that era, requires the intervention of the genius of the St. Apostle Paul, in order to identify solutions commensurate with the challenges to which he is subjected.

The present work aims to reveal the issue of the scandalous situation arising in the context of the cultic celebration of the Eucharist in the Church of Corinth, as well as the way in which the Apostle Paul treats this tense, conflict situation, arising in the heart of the Christian community born from the preaching, involvement and permanent support of apostle to the Gentiles.

In order to carry out such an approach, we will first try to discover the elements that were the basis of this flawed approach, in order to then emphasize the determining role of the Lord's Supper for the formation of ecclesial identity.

The problematic theme of the Eucharistic conflict in Corinth is in no way revolutionary or new in the field of contemporary biblical theology. However, the approach of the passage that refers to the acute need to identify viable solutions for the life of the Church in Corinth, proposes a rethinking of the Eucharistic origins, as well as a thorough research on the early ecclesial organization, because these two coordinates remain life-giving and meaningful to the church assembly over the ages..

The fellowship represented the defining element of what Paul calls the „*church*” (1 Cor. 11, 18). For the apostle then, and for Christendom onwards, the Eucharistic ties constitute the core of cultic organization and ecclesial cohesion. We thus have one more reason why the discovery and examination of the possible types of meals that may have influenced the Lord's Supper is worth taking seriously. Therefore, our study will seek to highlight whether or not in Corinth the Eucharistic meal was an adaptation to the banquets specific to the ancient culture and civilization, on the one hand, and also what were the challenges that required an acute intervention on the part of the father of the Corinthian community, alike.

The cultic events, the themes they encompass, the authenticity of the accounts, and how the Eucharist was developed in the early age have seen extensive areas of theological debate over the years. The reasons why the subject of the Eucharist has been so intensely

debated are understandable and are not necessarily the subject of this study. We briefly note only a few milestones that actually reflect the purpose of our research:

First, the Eucharist should be seen as the culmination of the fellowship meal that Jesus brought to the center of His preaching and work. This theme, of the Lord Jesus surrounded by sinners, whom he receives at the Last Supper, is often sidelined in current Eucharistic thought and debate. The mystery of the Eucharist therefore represents a concrete call to divine grace; a reminder of the fact that God invites especially those considered unworthy, initially, to understand that they also have a place prepared at His table (Lk. 14, 16-24).

The Eucharist did not remain in history only at the stage of an inflexible act of worship, but represented an essential unifying and defining component for the development of the Church in all times. Understanding the practical experience of the early Church with reference to meals is the key to understanding the conflict situation of the Christian community in Corinth. It is the reason why the Apostle Paul, in whose sense the community dimension of the mystery takes precedence, inserts in the center of the passage from chapter 11, 17-34 what represents the oldest writing of the sacred words which institute the Eucharist.

The intrinsic value of the Eucharistic act, which deserves to be highlighted here, is represented by its communal character. The same specificity can be distinguished from the Jewish or Greco-Roman sacred rites, the Christian order somewhat following the natural course in this sense. But in order to penetrate deeply into the implications of the Eucharistic tradition, it is necessary to intuit beyond the visible aspects according to which the Lord's Supper was organized in the early age.

The defining proclamation of the Church consists in announcing the Savior Jesus Risen from the dead, as Lord and head of His Church, and the faithful as being „*the body of Christ*” (1 Cor. 12, 27) at their birth „*from water and the Spirit*” (Jn. 3, 5) through the Holy Mystery of Baptism. Pauline theology emphasizes that the fullness of the Body of Christ is achieved through the incorporation of believers in the community event of the Church, where „*we all partake of one bread*” (1 Cor. 10, 17). The normative need for offering the Eucharist to the faithful comprises therefore an ecclesial purpose par excellence.

Consequently, we can also identify a subsidiary direction to the purpose of this work, which consists in the need to recognize the Eucharist in its deep complexity. In other words, if it is seen only as an individual gesture, we lose sight of the fact that, by its very nature, the Eucharist is a gift that can only be fulfilled within a common celebration. The direct and

personal union of each believer with Christ requires an authentic and living bond of believers with one another; this multidirectional establishment is based, beyond words, on the moral responsibility of each participant in the Mysteries of the Church.

All of the previously stated considerations, with reference to the importance of the Lord's Supper for the life of the Church, can constitute the starting point for a systematic approach to the proposed subject, both from a theological, historical and social point of view, as well as from a practical point of view. From the diversity of the preceding conflicts, which reached Paul's ears, to the way the Eucharist should be interpreted today, in the light of the Holy Scriptures, what we can emphasize is the urgent need for a scientific requirement in the theological approach to the study of the origins and practice of the Christian Eucharist.

Methodology and sources used:

Regarding the research methodology, necessary in order to obtain a coherent scientific approach, we emphasize a number of working methods and theories that must be applied in the theological reading of the present study:

Starting from the specific references of the culture of the era of the writing of the biblical text, it is necessary to use a comparative analysis, for a better understanding of the causal processes involved in the significant events of the church community in Corinth. Comparative research, conventionally, emphasizes the explanation of differences and similarities used in establishing agreement between two or more phenomena. Accordingly, the data on the ancient world, focusing especially on the Roman imperial era, when the Greek city was reorganized as a Roman colony, are taken with the aim of clarifying the common or specific features of the evangelized society.

In such a varied contextual and comparative framework, the approach must be, at the same time, interdisciplinary. This analytical twinning covers a wide spectrum of interconnected themes. Among all these, three basic themes can be identified: the Greco-Roman heritage in an imperial framework, the identification of subjects in a stratified social framework and the emphasis on local religious identities.

To emphasize the understanding of the cultural values and norms of antiquity in a textual analysis, social-scientific criticism is another necessary method, briefly described as „the stage of the exegetical task that analyzes the social and cultural dimensions of the text and its context by using perspectives, theory, models and social science research”. Applying this approach uncovers what happens behind the text to understand community meals as a process of identity shaping in *εκκλησίᾳ* Pauline, acting as a bridge between the past and the

present, providing both methods that can explain in some way, what the original historical and social contexts meant.

Another theory that is in our area of interest is that of social identity. As it focuses on relationships, belonging and identity, its definition can be understood as „that part of a person’s self-concept that derives from his knowledge of his membership in a social group, together with the values and emotional meanings attached to that membership”. In other words, belonging to certain social groups influences one’s self-image. In the context of the passage 1 Cor. 11, 17-34 the interest of the social identity theory approach is based on the discussions about group values, visible at ancient banquets and then at the Lord’s Supper, and the impact of these values on other identity subdivisions formed according to the dominant group.

We will also consider the historical-critical or diachronic method, since we are discussing a study that conveys decisive historical information for the elucidation of the situation described in the passage. Although this method has often been considered to be refractory to orthodox theology, in the present case historical study is used to discover the meaning of the passage as the author intended to convey his message and what the hearers would have understood.

The data of the work will be mainly based on the exegetical sources of the New Testament. The exegetical method is the only one that can be used in interpreting and explaining the details of the scriptural passage under study. The motivation underlying the use of the biblical exegetical method is determined by the fact that it helps to discover the meaning of the text and to provide results in relation to verifiable phenomena. In principle, exegesis wishes to avoid the exposition of dogmatic conclusions before the text has been honestly examined. Therefore, the exegesis will be done clearly, to allow the text to reveal attitudes and beliefs, without losing sight of how the passage relates to the overall context of Holy Scripture.

Pertinent and objective understanding of the Corinthian specifics is imperative in order to obtain a pertinent assessment of the situation under our study. Therefore, the projection of an adequate hermeneutic is based on the use of methods specific to the scientific research of the sacred text, with the historical and social interferences necessary for a holistic and objective perception of the problem of the Eucharistic conflict in Corinth.

The 1 Corinthians epistle is one of the most intensively debated Pauline epistles, due to the topics of interest raised by the St. Apostle Paul and preserved in the present, attracting

attention regardless of the historical era taken as a reference. The approach of the epistle is of great diversity, both general and thematic, from the patristic period to the present.

Patristic theology offers us some essential landmarks, also translated in the Orthodox space, in order to approach the exegete of this epistle, such as: St. John Chrysostom (*Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, translated by Archim. Theodosie Athanasiu, Ateliere graphice Socec & Co, Bucharest, 1908), St. Theophylact of Bulgaria (*Interpretation of the First Epistle to the Corinthians and the Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, trans. by Metropolitan Veniamin Costachi, edited by Florin Stuparu, Cartea Ortodoxă, Bucharest, 2005) or Saint Clement the Roman (*Epistle to the Corinthians*, trans. Dumitru Fecioru, in the Writings of the Apostolic Fathers, PSB, vol. 1, Biblical and Mission Institute of the Romanian Orthodox Church, Bucharest, 1979).

As far as the Romanian theological school is concerned, although we cannot identify extensive studies on the Epistle to the First Corinthians, there are still some works that constitute a solid basis for further more extensive approaches. Among the more extensive works, we mention the commentary by Fr. archim. Iosif Olariu (*Epistles of the Holy Apostle Paul to the Romans, Corinthians, Galatians and Ephesians*, Karánsebes, 1910), in which we find a vast exegetical approach to the 1 Corinthians Epistle. After more than a century from the previously mentioned commentary, the work of Fr. Mihai Petian (*Epistola 1 Corinteni*, Sibiu, 2016), which can be called the first Romanian commentary developed on the epistle, with a well-argued content in isagogical, exegetical and theological terms. Last but not least, we mention the doctoral thesis, *Typologies of the ecclesial conflict reflected in the Epistle to the First Corinthians*, supported by Ioan Szasz, under the scientific coordination of Rev. Prof. Univ. Dr. Stelian Tofană in 2017, and later translated into a remarkable editorial appearance, under the title *Was Christ divided? Typologies of the ecclesial conflict reflected in Epistle 1 Corinthians* (Risoprint / Pleroma, Bucharest, 2018), which exposes in an extensive analysis, the totality of the existing conflicts in the church of Corinth, including the subject of this thesis, in a sub-chapter that focuses on the analysis of the conflict Eucharist from verses 17-34.

Along with the above-mentioned publications, we also mention a series of studies and articles that partially or thematically address the Epistle to the First Corinthians. Among these we record, in a chronological sequence, the following works: Diac. Prof. Nicolae Nicolaescu, „The Actuality of the First Epistle to the Corinthians of the Saint Apostle Paul”, in *Theological Studies*, III, no. 3-4, 1951; Fr. mgrd. Gh. Bălan, „Saint Paul the Apostle and the Christians in Corinth”, in *Theological Studies*, IX, no. 7-8, 1957; Rev. Dr. Stelian Tofană,

„Christian responsibility according to the Epistles of the St. Apostle Paul”, in *Theological Studies*, no. 5, 1986; Rev. Prof. Dr. Constantin Coman, „Gospel and Preaching. Meditation on chapters I and II of the Epistle to the First Corinthians”, in *Church Guide*, Galati, 1989; Rev. Prof. Dr. Vasile Mihoc, „Communion of believers with Christ and with each other through the Holy Eucharist, according to 1 Corinthians 10, 14-22”, in *Person and communion*, Sibiu, 1993, p. 420-434; Ioan Voineag, „Holy Eucharist and preparation for Eucharistic communion according to I Corinthians 11, 23-32”, in *Theological Review*, no. 3, 2007; Rev. Prof. Dr. Stelian Tofană, „Is the charisma of speaking in other languages still present in the Church? A Pauline perspective”, in *Orthodox Theology, Studia Universitas - Babeş-Bolyai*, Cluj Napoca, no. 1, 2011; Ion-Sorin Bora, „“The strong” and “the weak”, according to I Corinthians 8-10”, in *Altarul Banatului*, no. 7-9, 2012; Cătălin Varga, „The Problem of the Holy Eucharist in the Church of Corinth”, in *Altarul Banatului*, no. 1-3, 2015.

Last, but not least, we will mention some reference works for our approach, especially due to the fact that an overwhelming proportion of the bibliographic literature addressed is made up of works belonging to the Western theological space, developed in English, categorized into biblical commentaries and specialized works which directly or tangentially deals with the subject of this thesis.

The starting point of the entire research process was a series of reference biblical commentaries, which evoke both the historical context and the textual value of the 1 Corinthians Epistle:

Gordon D. Fee (*The First Epistles to the Corinthians*, NICNT, Grand Rapids, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Michigan, 1987), in one of the most highly rated and complex commentaries on 1 Corinthians, addresses the issue of abuse in Corinth in a problem-answer format. The detailed exegetical analysis of the sacred text seeks to correlate the socio-cultural and ethnic background of the problems in Corinth with the spiritual misunderstandings, placing this in a new context of the unity of the body, all members being equally concerned with each other.

Anthony C. Thiselton (*The First Epistles to the Corinthians*, NIGTC, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 2000) provides the most detailed commentary on this epistle. The author presents his own translation from the Greek, tracing the main problems of interpretation from the church fathers to the present. Topics of theological, ethical, and socio-historical interest are highlighted in a comprehensive and original exposition updated to the contemporary relevances of understanding the biblical text. The work does not necessarily seek to explain

the causes of the conflict in Corinth, but it provides a foray into the most important studies of modern biblical scholarship.

David E. Garland (*First Corinthians*, BECNT, Baker Academic, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2003) is based on extensive research and involves the best-rated contemporary studies. His exegetical work considers the context of the writing, the social and cultural setting of Corinth. It incorporates references to other ancient writings that help explain particular significant aspects and a more detailed approach to the revealed text.

Joseph A. Fitzmyer (*First Corinthians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AYB, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, ¹2008) presents us with an exegetical and applied commentary distinguished by a detailed lexical analysis, with grammatical discussions especially for the Greek text and the constant historical concerns of Paul's Corinth. This approach gives him a perspective anchored in the rhetorical devices used by the author, which reduces the risk of forcing the meanings of the text.

Ben Witherington III (*Conflict and Community in Corinth. A Socio- Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians*, SRC, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1995) stands out for its excellent social-scientific approach to the Corinthian correspondence. He combines literary criticism with historical elements, foregrounding the ancient oratorical model. His main thesis starts from the idea that the nature of the conflicts in Corinth was determined by social problems, to which the Apostle Paul responds by redefining theological, ethical and social principles.

Richard A. Horsely (*1 Corinthians*, ANTC, Abingdon Press, 1998) aims in his commentary to highlight the socio-political context but also the alarming religious disagreements between the apostle and the church in Corinth. The author sees the epistle as a window that reflects the tensions between the Christians' interest in promoting a dissipated spirituality and the apostle's desire to build a social-religious community devoted to a common desideratum, beneficial for both personal dignity and group solidarity.

At the same time, with regard to the international specialized works consulted, we mention some of the most representative and suitable for our research object:

A first work of particular importance is that of Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, *St. Paul's Corinth: Texts and Archeology*, (GNS, Liturgical Press, 2002) because it brings to the fore a series of archaeological information that provides a detailed picture of Corinth in the ancient world.

Ben Witherington III, in *Making a Meal of It: Rethinking the Theology of the Lord's Supper* (Baylor University Press, Waco, 2007) provides a deep and extensive view of the

practice of the Lord's Supper, starting from its historical context, but treats the acts of worship in the Corinthian community separately from the Greco-Roman banquet. The specificity of the work also consists in the pastoral guidelines offered to the faithful to emphasize the idea of communion both vertically and horizontally.

Gerd Theissen, in *The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity: Essays on Corinth* (T & T Clark, Edinburgh, 1999), considered one of the most notable approaches to contemporary New Testament studies, includes a series of essays designed to emphasize on the social matrix in which the early church documents appeared.

Dennis E. Smith (*From Symposium to Eucharist: The Banquet in the Early Christian World*, Fortress Press, 2003) contributes a great deal of data on Greco-Roman dining customs and the development of the early Church. The work leads to a new understanding of tables, in that the generic tradition of the banquet is the archetype for both Jewish and Greco-Roman banquets. Smith noted the interest in the banquet as a social institution, transcending ethnic and class boundaries, playing an essential political, economic, social and religious role.

Exclusion work and Judgment in Fellowship Meals: The Socio-historical Background of 1 Corinthians 11:17–34 (Pickwick Publications, 2016) of Jamir Lanuwabang tries to argue that the tradition of fellowship meals is the background against which the Lord's Supper must be distinguished from other types of communal meal arrangements. The author concludes that in Corinth socio-economic factors represented only part of the problem, ideological inconsistencies remaining the essential factor in the split of the Church in Corinth.

Wayne A. Meeks, in *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983) offers a reconstruction of the urban environment of Pauline Christianity, grounded in archaeological, biblical, and literary evidence. Analyzing the evidence regarding the formation of the Church, in the light of the daily patterns of the 1st century AD. (the household, the voluntary associations, the synagogue or the philosophical schools), Meeks delineated the reports to the previously enunciated institutions, highlighting both conjunctions and disjunctions to all of them.

Last but not least, we note the work of Bruce W. Winter, *After Paul Left Corinth: The Influence of Secular Ethics and Social Change* (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2001). It comprises a relevant and well-argued picture of the experience of life in Roman Corinth. In this setting, Winter describes the turmoil of the Christian community founded by Paul, which often sought answers to the new challenges it faced. The author examines the

ways of communication of the Church during Paul's stay in the city, as well as the social changes that took place after the apostle left the city. Winter's work offers a different perspective to which we can relate in order to elucidate the Pauline Corinthian correspondence.

We believe that the reference works from the domestic and international research space, along with various studies and articles that at least touch tangentially on our topic of interest, represent a sufficient foundation for approaching the present work theme. The area of study is vast, especially in the Western space, being present in a variety of historical, social and exegetical research approaches down to the smallest details.

Structure and delimitation of the study:

Regarding the structure and composition of the paper, it falls within the standard format required for the preparation of a scientific paper. Thus, after the presentation of the table of contents, the abbreviations used and a preliminary chapter, a composition of three parts elaborated unitarily, which treats the subject in a progressive manner, both from the point of view of the textual expansion and the theological approach, aims to provide related and gradual deductions in order to approach the proposed topic. The three chapters are followed by the conclusions drawn from this work and end with the consulted bibliography.

The first chapter of the work, entitled „The specifics of the Corinthian community”, highlights the characteristics of the new church community in Corinth. Although the city of Corinth was part of the preaching area of Saint Paul, within the borders of the Roman Empire, it was characterized as an atypical city, where the socio-economic barriers of the time were often escalated. The cultural and religious environment depicted in this first part completes the picture in which the Apostle Paul would have had to implement the values and rigors preached through the Holy Gospels.

The second part, found under the title „The Holy Apostle Paul and the challenges of the Church in Corinth”, brings together the reasons why the Apostle Paul considered winning this city essential for his general missionary plan and highlights the pastoral zeal shown in order to achieve this goal. In this sense, it should not be taken out of context that the Apostle Paul had the status of a Jew from the diaspora, forced to balance between the Jewish and the pagan environment. From these considerations, a series of tensions were born, for which Paul had to offer practical solutions - for him, the solution lies beyond the two dominant cultures, namely in the Church - the Body of Christ. A final point of this chapter considers

the situation of church organization around prominent people within the community of Corinth.

The third part, generically named „The Lord’s Supper and its significance in the formation of community-Christian identity”, addresses the formative role of the Lord’s Supper in the public worship of the Church. In this sense, we tried to highlight both the characteristics of pagan meals and their interpenetration with the practices of the fraternal meals of the first evangelized community. The last three sub-chapters emphasize the role played by the collective / personal conscience in relation to the Eucharist. An exegetical approach is proposed for a pertinent decipherment of the treated subject, starting from a series of key terms contained between verses 17-34, an approach that finally crystallizes the Pauline Eucharistic perspective and proposes some coordinates intended for the contemporary approach to the passage mentioned above.

In order to respond to the attempt to evaluate the problem of the Eucharist in Corinth, as it is found exposed in verses 17-34, the work will not follow an exegetical exposition verse by verse, but will focus on the analysis of certain terms or expressions that respond to the objectives of the present research.

Before analyzing the practice of the Lord’s Supper in Corinth, due to the breadth of the general subject of the Lord’s Supper, some limitations imposed on this thesis will be necessary:

First of all, the only text we focus on is the passage 1 Corinthians 11, 17-34. Although there are other accounts of the Lord’s Supper in the Gospels, they are presented without being examined comparatively in detail. The historical background of the study focuses on Paul’s understanding of the Lord’s Supper and its historical context, as reflected in his first letter to the Christians in Corinth. References are also made to other evangelical traditions, but they are not the central points of the research.

In terms of cultural influences, we aim to show how the Greco-Roman banquet model influenced the practice of the Lord’s Supper in the Corinthian Church. We will not discuss in detail other possible influences, such as the tradition of the Jewish meal or other cultures that could be considered predecessors of the Eucharist. We will consider the paschal tradition of the Old Testament in the context of the Lord’s Supper, in order to highlight the influence on the unique event of the Last Supper, but not to argue for or against the establishment of the Passover meal as the pattern of the Eucharistic order. Moreover, we do not support the existence of a single prototypical table for the Eucharist, but only the existence of certain forms that could be assimilated to the ritual of the Lord’s Supper described in the epistle.

The positive aspect of these limitations is given by the fact that they will help us to focus on the specific topic that we want to address in the research on the Lord's Supper in Corinth, while also opening up the possibility of addressing the topics listed above in separate subsequent studies.