Purge the Old Leaven:
Aspects of Church Discipline in the Bible, Theology, and Culture

Jesus ate with Sinners: Between Church Discipline and Hospitality

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KEY WORDS

| Church Discipline | Hospitality | Table Fellowship | Jesus | Inclusivism | Lord's Supper |

ABSTRACT

Most scholars agree that Jesus' meal times with tax collectors and sinners were a major part of His ministry. This acknowledgement that Jesus ate with sinners has led to an inclusive approach to mission and function of the church by many churches today. There is a tendency to allow participation within the church community and at the Lord's Table despite individuals living in a sinful lifestyle. This, however, defies the prohibitions of Jesus, Paul, and John who prohibited that those conducting themselves in immoral acts should be allowed to eat and fellowship with the church. Therefore, Jesus' actions and teachings are juxtaposed between the open call of hospitality and the exclusive approach of church discipline. This essay seeks to harmonise these two aspects and present a principle for ministry in mission that is summarised in the Parable of the Wedding Banquet that "many are called but few are chosen".

INTRODUCTION

It is widely agreed that Jesus' association with "Sinners" during meal times is a major part of His ministry (Mt 11:19; Lk 7:34). Critics of His behaviour reflects the thoughts and attitudes of those who separated themselves from certain groups of people for religious purity and ethical reasons. Through an analysis of Second Temple Period writings, Craig Blomberg in his article *Jesus, Sinners, and Table Fellowship*, highlights general attitudes within Second Temple Judaism towards table fellowship. He notes:

> Second Temple Judaism thus, in many respects, saw the drawing of even sharper boundaries between pious Jews and unclean outsiders. Table fellowship could create intimate friendship, so it was increasingly reserved for those whom a person deemed the right kind of companions, who ate the right kinds of food.[1]

Jesus, therefore, ate with people who many other religious Jews would not eat with. In contrast with the Scribes and Pharisees, Jesus' association with tax collectors and sinners appeared to be "radical", if not antagonistic, towards social and religious norms of the day. Jesus has therefore been heralded as a pioneer for social justice, a man ahead of his times, an innovator of inclusivism, and opponent of oppression. Jesus' actions of including "sinners"

1 Craig Blomberg, "Jesus, Sinners, And Table Fellowship," *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 19:1 (2009), 44.

have been described as "dangerous"[2] and "scandalous"[3].

Furthermore, it is also extensively agreed that the meals Jesus shared with others are a picture of the future Messianic banquet. Jesus' invitation to eat with him was symbolic of the invitation to the Kingdom of God. An invitation that was given to "tax collectors and sinners" rather than the pious Pharisees. Such a reading of the narrative of the Gospels has provoked many to exhort Christians to "do as Jesus did" and take on an inclusive missiological and ecclesiastical approach.[4] It is believed that Christians should embrace "sinners" and not exclude them from participation in public worship and church-community contexts. For exclusion, "keeping out", is bad and inclusion, "taking in", is good.[5] It is therefore those who exclude others who are the real "sinners" and are ironically excluded from the banquet of the Kingdom. The notion of inclusivism is not the same as universalism, as there are those who are even excluded from the Kingdom in the inclusivist model. These are described by Emergent leader Brian McLaren as people who are opposed to the purpose of the Kingdom, the purpose being radical inclusivism.[6] One might suggest that such a notion of excluding people for excluding others is hypocritical, Miroslav Volf responds, "Judgement of exclusion is not exclusion, but an end of exclusion"[7].

Exclusion from table fellowship then is something that appears to be un-Christian, not Christ-like. Such a notion, however, clashes with the words of Paul who commanded the Corinthians to not associate or eat with the "sinner" in 1 Corinthians 5.The Johannine prohibition of extending hospitality to those bringing a different doctrine (2 John 1:10) raises further difficulty as exclusion due to personal belief is considered an act of extremism by our pluralistic society. Robert Vosloo writes:

> One can ask whether the exclusion of people from the table as part of church discipline does not often result in a form of moral gatekeeping that threatens to negate the welcoming character of God's grace.[8]

How then can one understand the juxtaposition between hospitality and church discipline? Vosloo concludes that equating "hospitality with indifferent tolerance and church discipline with reductive moralism, ought to be avoided"[9]. The view that Jesus was "radically inclusive" therefore destabilises the message of grace seen

2 R. K. Harris argues that Jesus' inclusive approach to eating with sinners was dangerous and that "Jesus was killed for the way he ate" (Harris, R. K. (1985) *Luke: Artist and Theologian*. New York: Paulist, 70) For a better understanding of why Jesus was killed see Darrell L. Bock, *Blasphemy and Exaltation in Judaism: The Charge against Jesus in Mark 14:53-65*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2000).

3 Brian McLaren calls Jesus' inclusion "shocking, scandalous inclusion". Brian McLaren, *The Secret Message of Jesus: Uncovering the Truth that Could Change Everything*. (Nashville, TN: W Publishing Group, 2006), 163. Joel Green also writes of Jesus' inclusiveness as scandalous particularly in the case of the woman who let her hair down to wash Jesus' feet (Luke 7:36-50). Green notes that such action would have been seen as sexually provocative (Joel Green, *The Gospel of Luke* (*NICNT*). (Grand Rapids, MI: Willian B. Eerdmann's Publishing Company, 1997), 310) However, Blomberg argues that in Greco-Roman culture letting ones hair down is a sign of devotion to a deity. Furthermore, the action of weeping and use of hair express deep sorrow for her sinfulness. Luke wanted to express this woman was repenting and that Christ had forgiven her sin (Blomberg, 2009, 50).

4 The most prominent advocate of this view is Emergent Church leader Brian McLaren

5 Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion & Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation*. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1996) 62.

6 EdMackenzie, "Mission and the Inclusive Kingdom of Jesus: Assessing the Missiological approach of Brian McLaren," *Missiology: An International Review* (2015), 2.

7 Volf, 1996, 68.

8 Robert R. Vosloo, "The Welcoming Table? The Lord's Supper, Exclusion, and the Reformed Tradition" in *Strangers and Pilgrims on Earth: Essays in Honour of Abraham van de Beek*, eds. Paul van Geest and Eduardus van der Borght (Leiden: BRILL, 2012), 484

9 Ibid 499-500.

within this juxtaposition. To quote Bonhoeffer it is "cheap grace"[10]. One needs to take into account the boundaries, the message, and the demands Jesus gave in His invitation to "take up your cross and follow me". Once we establish a biblical perspective of hospitality and church discipline then we will see that the two are not mutually exclusive.

This essay will look at the hospitality of Jesus and the identity of the "sinners" he ate with. When we begin to understand the social situation of the Second Temple Judaism and Jesus' call to repentance, we discover that the inclusivist reading of the Gospel narrative is misleading. The sum of Jesus' invitation is found in the Parable of the Wedding banquet, which concludes "many are called, but few are chosen" (Matthew 22:14). If Jesus was exclusive, can we really describe exclusivism as evil? Whatever conclusion we come to concerning Jesus' hospitality has an impact on the practice of the Lord's Supper and whether a believer should be excluded from participating in Communion.

JESUS AND THE SINNER

It would be helpful in our investigation of asking how inclusive Jesus was to establish who these "sinners" were. M. J. Wilkins provides two views of how the terms sinner is to be understood. (1) Sinner is a term towards those outside the factional group. Various sectarian groups believed those outside their particular group were evil. The Qumran community responsible for the Dead Sea Scrolls referred to those outside of their group as "sons of disobedience".[11] (2) Sinners are wicked ones outside of the law. This is not necessarily those who refused to obey, but rather those who could not retain ritual purity thus not keeping the law.[12] This second view is the most popular and is held by those who argue that Jesus was inclusive. The term sinner then becomes a byword for those who are marginalised. Sinner is a term that is often associated with tax collector. In turn, tax collectors are often associated with prostitutes. As Jesus ate with all of them as well as those exorcized of demons, the poor, and marginalised ethnic groups such as the Samaritans, Jesus is declared fiend of the marginalised. However, is it historically correct to brush these distinct groups of people with one broad stroke?

For example, Johnathan Draper, in response to Richard A. Burridge's *Imitating Jesus: An Inclusive approach to New Testament Ethics*, correctly observes that Jesus could not be inclusive towards the poor because he was poor.[13] The very definition of inclusion is to "take in" those who are outside. Similar logic then can be expressed in bewilderment of tax collectors being placed in the category of marginalised along with the poor. Tax collectors were often wealthy and enjoyed reasonable social status in certain circles. They collected taxes on behalf of the Roman occupying force, so were despised by fellow Jews and were seen as collaborators by those with nationalistic tendencies. Being despised by the *am ha'aretz* (people of the land) does not constitute as being marginalised.

10 See Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship. Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works, Vol. 4.* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press,2001), 44.Vosloo highlights the meaning of cheap grace as "preaching forgiveness without repentance," "Baptism without discipline of community," "the Lord's Supper without confession of sin," and "absolution without personal confession". (Vosloo, 2012, 500)

11 Michael J. Wilkins, "Sinner" in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, eds. Joel B. Green, Scott McKnight, and I. H. Marshall, (Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP, 1992), 757.

12 Ibid, 759.

13 Jonathan A. Draper, "Imitating Jesus, yes- but which Jesus? A Critical Engagement with the Ethics of Richard Burridge in *Imitating Jesus: An Inclusive Approach to New Testament Ethics*". *HTS Theological Studies* Vol. 65 (1) (2007), 3.

Jacob Neusner takes to task the misgivings of E P Sanders, who identifies in his book Jesus and Judaism that the "sinners" were people ritually unclean. Neusner argues that from a Pharasaical perspective "uncleanness is not a moral category but it is ontological".[14] He further explains:

> To be able to become unclean formed a measure of the capacity to become holy, so that, the more susceptible to uncleanness, and the more differentiated the uncleanness to which susceptibility pertained, the more capable of becoming holy, and the more differentiated the layers and levels of holiness that entered consideration.[15]

Therefore, the status of being unclean does not imply that one is a sinner. It is clear from an ontological perspective that the opposite of unclean is holy. Confusion arises, however, that holiness can be categorised as both moral and ontological therefore uncleanness as the antonym of holiness is imputed incorrectly into a moral category. The synonym for unclean is not sinner but rather "outsider" or "gentile".[16] Jesus, of course, interacts with unclean people, but they need to be distinguished from "sinners". Unfortunately, these two categories are intermingled and have implications in moral judgement today. Some have placed the sin of homosexuality into an ontological category and therefore our response should be to tolerate their marginalised status in society.

Neusner highlights that Sanders "has a consistent interest in portraying Jesus as a teacher who accepted, not merely the impure, but the wicked into his fellowship".[17]However, Neusner claims further separation between the terms "sinner" and "wicked" via linguistic analysis in Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic. He notes from the Septuagint that the Greek word for sinner, *harmartolos*, corresponds with five root words in the Hebrew Masoretic Text (*ht', hnp, hrs, r', rs'*).[18] The term "wicked", *resa'im* in Hebrew, though finds its roots in the wider representation of *rs'*, however, its contextual use is more "harsh" indicating a sense of judgement. Neusner notes that in the Hebrew Scriptures the wicked are "scheduled for punishment", whereas "sinners" are often offered chance of repentance.[19] This distinction in the Hebrew text made by Neusner appears to be overstretched as the terms "sinner" and "wicked" appears together in multiple passages (Psalm 1:1,5; Psa 104:35; Prov 11:31 Eccl 9:2). However, the root to the term Sinner n the gospel derives from an Aramaic context with a softer application. Aramaic texts such as the Targum of Isaiah, the roots *rs'*, *hnp*, and *ht'* are "presented by appropriate forms of the Aramaic *hwb*"", which means "debtor" or "sinner".[20]

The Aramaic idiom of debtors is present in the Lord's Prayer as the Lord instructs his disciples to pray *"forgive our debts, as we forgive our debts"*.[21] The parabolic teachings of Jesus also made use of the analogy of debt, especially in the Parable of the Unforgiving Servant (Matthew 18:23-35). This parable this parable immediately follows the Lord's instruction on church discipline emphasising that believers have been forgiven an insurmountable debt by God and therefore should be willing to show forgiveness to those who are indebted to us.

Jesus did eat with sinners and tax collectors,

14 Jacob Neusner, "Uncleaness: A Moral or An Ontological Category in the Early Centuries A.D.?" *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 01:1 (1991), 65.

15 Ibid, 65.

16 Ibid, 70.

17 Ibid, 82.

18 Ibid, 84.

19 Ibid, 84.

20 Ibid, 85.

21 Ibid, 85.

people who were morally corrupt; however, they were confronted with a call to repentance.[22] Tax collectors would extort money from the poor. They were involved in the financial enterprise of prostitution. So, does this mean Jesus was inclusive towards immoral people who engaged in, for example, fraud, theft, murder, adultery, or fornication? The answer is both yes and no. Yes, because Jesus called those who were sinners and depraved. Jesus said "they that are healthy are in no need of a physician, but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (Matthew 9:12; Mark 2:17; Luke 5:31). This leads us to the answer of no, Jesus was not inclusive of immoral people. The invitation to eat with Jesus was an invitation to repent and be accepted into the Kingdom of God. Draper notes "open commensality with no concern for justice, in other words repentance and restitution, shown by Zacchaeus, would simply be a 'sell out' by Jesus".[23]

To view Jesus as accepting sinners without repentance would be a case of distorting the overall message of Jesus in order to fit into a particular model. This is not exegesis but rather a kind of revisionism that has no integrity at all.[24] We embrace certain parts of the narratives, while excluding others. For Example, in John 4 Jesus requests a drink from the Samaritan woman at the well and offering her "living water" from which she would never thirst again giving her everlasting life. This story is wonderfully inclusive as the male Jew, Jesus, asks for the hospitality of a marginalised Samaritan woman. Yet, the invitation is met with a question of her religious beliefs (John 4:21-24) and her sexual morality (John 4:16-18). The story does not end with an explicit call for repentance in the same way the story of the woman caught in adultery concludes, "go and sin no more" (John 8:11); however, John writes that this woman came to believe on Jesus, which implies that she received his call in turning away from the Samaritan religion and sexual sin. Andrew McGowan succinctly writes "*there is an exclusive element of this inclusive vision; some are invited in, others are cast out… universal in scope, but selective in application*".[25]

THE PARABLE OF THE WEDDING BANQUET

The point raised by McGowen that the banquet is "*universal in scope, but selective in application*" is encapsulated in the Parable of the Wedding Banquet in Matthew 22. The parable begins with a call to those who were invited to the wedding to come. These people rejected the call and refused to come. The King sent out servants a second time to call those invited to the wedding. On this occasion some mocked and proceeded either to their home or continued with their work. A remnant of the invited guests took hold of the servants and killed them. The king was wroth and destroyed the murderers and their cities. The King then sent the servants out a third time. This time they are told to go into the highways and byways inviting anyone they encountered to come to the wedding feast. The servants were said to have found guests both good and bad. As the king came to greet the guests he found a

22 Draper even argues that Jesus didn't really eat with sinners because those who ate with Jesus were "repentant and forgiven", therefore no longer under the category of "sinner". (Draper, 2007, 2)

23 Draper, 2007, 2.

24 Denny Burk questions Burridge's preference of the historical Jesus over the Gospel portrait of Jesus. Burk rightly states that this hermeneutic undermines the authority of Scripture. (Denny Burk, "Why Evangelicals Should Ignore Brian McLaren: How the New Testament Requires Evangelicals to Render Judgement on the Moral Status of Homosexuality". *Themelios* Vol. 35 Issue 2, (July 2010), 218).

25 Andrew McGowen. "Dangerous Eating? Jesus, Inclusion, and Communion". *Liturgy* Vol. 20 Issue 4, (2007), 16.

man not dressed appropriately for the wedding. The king was angered and ordered the servants to cast him into the outer darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth. Jesus concludes the parable with a phrase that sums up his inclusiveness, "*many are called, but few are chosen*" (Matthew 22:14).

Blomberg highlights that this parable reinforces Jesus' point that he will not tolerate those who refuse his invitation.[26] Richard Bauckham further draws upon the meaning of the parable as stating that "*Those unworthy of entering the Kingdom of God are not only those who spurn the invitation but also those who ostensibly accept it while rejecting what it really represents.*"[27] The Kingdom then is offered to everyone but even those who accept the invitation without repentance will not be included in the Messianic banquet. This of course highlights a certain exclusivity to the Kingdom that many inclusivists are unwilling to accept.

When we read the gospel narratives of Jesus' encounters with tax collectors, sinners, the unclean, the demon possessed, we see that those people when accepting of the Kingdom, never stay as they were before. Zacchaeus changed from greedy tax collector to generous giver to the poor. The man possessed of a demon at Gadarenes encountered Jesus and then was sitting and eating in his right mind. Even those who were ritually unclean through leprosy were made clean. If Jesus was an inclusive, why change them? Surely, if Jesus was accepting of people within the margins he would not have changed them and let them remain in the margins. The moral of the story is, in fact, that Jesus took their place in the margins. Those who were changed by Jesus were now eligible to have table fellowship with the pious; however, Jesus became more marginalised. Case in point is the Gardarenes demoniac. He was able to have table fellowship with others but it meant Jesus could no longer enter the city (Mark 5:17). McGowan also explains that the "*stories in the gospels where Jesus eats with the marginalized was not to encourage Christians to eat with the poor but for them who are marginalized to come to the banquet*".[28] In other words the gospels were written as a proclamation of the gospel message that Christ took the place of sinners and that we who are sinners should accept the invitation to come.

Of course, the church must follow Christ's example which is to preach the gospel to all people. Just as Christ became marginalised when he changed peoples live and preached a message of repentance, the Christian also faces similar marginalisation as we preach the gospel to transform lives. In an age of pluralism, relativism, and liberalism, Christians who hold to the gospel are marginalised for their beliefs because they diametrically oppose the "new morality" of what society says is good and evil. Therefore, in today's world it is difficult conversing with non-Christians (and some Christians) about who and what is a sinner. Many view certain tenants of Christianity as immoral. Especially Christians who engage in a particular moral evil of society today, exclusivism.

IS EXCLUSION EVIL?

Volf describes exclusion as "the violence of expulsion, assimilation, or subjugation and the indifference of abandonment replace the

26 Blomberg, 2009, 59.

27 Richard Bauckham, "The Parable of the Royal Wedding Feast (Matthew 22:1-14) and the Parable of the Lame Man and the Blind Man (Apocryphon of Ezekiel)". *Journal of Biblical Literature* Vol. 115, No. 3, (Autumn 1996), 488.

28 McGowen. 2005, 18.

dynamics of taking in and keeping out as well as the mutuality of giving and receiving". [29] He explains that this is the "bare-bones" of what exclusion is and must be distinguished from drawing and maintaining boundaries.[30] He continues:

> Vilify all boundaries, pronounce every discrete identity oppressive, put the tag "exclusion" on every stable difference- and you will have aimless drifting instead of clear-sighted agency, haphazard activity instead of moral engagement and accountability and, in the long run, a torpor of death instead of a dance of freedom.[31]

I agree with Volf's distinction between exclusion and boundaries, I have to disagree that his other criteria for exclusion is altogether negative. This is to say that expulsion, assimilation and subjugation can only be seen as negative if they are practiced in a prejudiced manner. Expulsion because of race or disability is an evil that exists in the world today. Yet, expulsion towards someone who is morally depraved who refuses to repent is far from evil. It is good and just, as it is necessary to protect people. Would it be good to allow a paedophile to mix within a church with young children?

Is any sort of physical ("violent") expulsion reasonable? Those who preach an inclusive Jesus avoid the event where Jesus drove the money changers out of the Temple. This event is recorded in all four gospels and is an important part of Jesus' ministry as He cleansed the Temple of those extorting money from those devoted to worshipping God at the Temple. Perhaps some may say that Jesus was removing the obstacle that excluded others from worship[32]; however, the physical element to their expulsion places Christian inclusivists in a difficult position. Jesus had the authority to drive out the moneychangers as the law gives the authority to officers of the law to physically remove or apprehend immoral reprobates who refuse to be brought to justice. Expulsion, then is not an evil per se, and can be used for good when contextually performed lawfully and not by prejudice.

Assimilation and subjugation are also not wholly evil. When people are forced to assimilate culturally and ethically for political advancement and power, then this is indeed wrong. Volf's thoughts relate to his experience of the war torn former country Yugoslavia in the early 1990's, where assimilation and subjugation were oppressive actions. From a Biblical Theological perspective assimilation and subjugation are expressions of self-denial. To be a Christian one must take up their cross and follow Jesus. This means that our identity is in Christ, therefore, assimilating to His ways, whether or not they be contrary to our cultural ethic or identity. Christians are those who are subject to Christ, bond servants and slaves, who serve Him by denying their freedom to "do as they like". This is a free will commitment that additionally expresses the greater objective of denying ourselves and our subjective morality thus accepting God's objective morality.

The issue of church discipline with the possibility of exclusion must be viewed in this light. Expulsion is necessary at times for the sake of the body. Assimilation and subjugation of the

29 Volf, 1996, 67.

30 Ibid, 67.

31 Ibid, 64. Amos Yong agrees, "unless we draw a line – a boundary – and say that something lies outside its domain, then we can speak about nothing that lies inside with real meaning, without boundaries, there will be no system into which anyone could be invited" (Amos Yong, *Hospitality and the Other: Pentecost, Christian Practices, and the Neighbour*. (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2008), 123).

32 See Douglas Thompson Goodwin, *The Cleansing of the Temple in the Fourth Gospel as a Call to Action for Social Justice*. (Boiling Springs, NC: Gardner-Webb University (MA Thesis), 2014), 68.

individual, denying their sin and changing their lives to follow what God says is right and serve him if they are to be restored to fellowship. The option for repentance and restoration must always be available. Jesus did of course eat with sinners, giving an invitation to those who were morally corrupt but only once they accepted his invitation to table fellowship accompanied with repentance.

So, what kind of impact do these principles have on the practice of the Lord's Supper in churches today?

CHURCH DISCIPLINE AND THE LORD'S SUPPER

Table fellowship within churches far exceeds the practice of the Lord's Supper; however, this ordinance is considered more sacred than any other time Christians eat together for fellowship and worship. The practice of communion is multi-functional in that it is the centre piece of worship in that Christians remember the atoning sacrifice Jesus made on the cross through his pierced body and shed blood. The practice of the Lord's Supper also "proclaims His death until he comes" (1 Corinthians 11:26).

In the earliest church writings the practice of close communion is advocated that only baptised Christians may participate in the Lord's Supper. In more recent times there has been a precedent to have an "open" table in an evangelistic manner as an invitation to non-Christians to eat the "bread of forgiveness" and drink the "wine of release"[33]. With non-Christians given a place at participating in the Lord's Supper, how then can we refuse the Lord's Supper from our Christian brothers even though they are in unrepentant sin? Gordon Fee argues a principle summarised in 1 Corinthians 5:12-13 simply as "free association outside the church, because God is judge and not the church, but strict discipline in the church".[34]This may provide a basis for including non-Christians at the table and excluding believers under discipline; however, there is a general exclusivity to the table in the actions and words of Jesus and Paul that those who are unrepentant cannot participate.

Kathryn Tanner, in favour of open communion, argues that Jesus ate with sinners at the Last Supper, which was the prototype of the Lord's Supper.[35] He ate with Judas who betrayed Him. He ate with Peter who denied Him three times. How then can we refuse sinners at the communion table when Jesus ate with sinners at the first communion service?

Tanner's use of Judas and Peter is provocative and raises an interesting point, but rather serves the purpose of advocating exclusion from the Lord's Supper rather than inclusiveness. At the time of the Last Supper Peter had not yet denied the Lord. Peter's denial was for a short period. When Peter realised what he did and remembered the words of the Lord he wept with tears of repentance. Peter returned to the other disciples and continued as he did before, being identified as a disciple of Jesus. He was later restored (John 21) and ate once again with Jesus. Judas on the other hand was a sinner who ate with Jesus and left half way through the meal. He was not repentant and suffered the consequences of his actions (Acts 1:18-19).

The rhetorical arguments made by inclusivists in allowing anyone to the communion table firstly ignore the direct

33 "Bread of forgiveness and wine of release" are lyrics from Michael Card's song "Come to the Table" from the album *The Life* (Navarre Corporation, 1994).

34 Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (*NICNT*). (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdman's Publishing Company, 1987), 227.

35 Kathryn Tanner, "In Praise of Open Communion: A Rejoinder to James Farwell". *Anglican Theological Review* 86:3 (2004), 476.

commandment by Jesus and the apostles to not eat with those who are unrepentant. Secondly, they do not understand the Jewish context of participating in the Lord's Supper. We must remember that the Lord's Supper is covenantal meal, "*Covenant ceremonies entail promises and curses that come as a result of keeping or breaking its stipulations.*"[36] Practicing the Lord's Supper in an unworthy manner led to Christians in the Corinthian church falling ill and even dying (1 Corinthians 11:29-30). The Lord's Supper is not to be taken lightly.

The Didache, written in the Second century, instructs "No one is to eat or drink of your Eucharist but those who have been baptised in the Name of the Lord; for the Lord's own saying applies here, 'Give not that which is holy unto dogs'" (Didache 9:5). Huub Van de Sandt highlights that the Didache represent Jewish purity regulations with the shorter version of the Lord's words in Matthew 7:6 "The Didache's shorter saying is found in similarity to common expression in rabbinic literature 'holy things are not to be redeemed to feed them to the dogs'".[37] The prohibition of dogs to prevent defilement is expressed in writings of the Second Temple Period. The impurity of dogs serves as a "*mashal*" (parable), which was commonly expressed in Jewish purity discussions.[38] Van de Sant highlights that early Jewish writings such as Philo, Jubilees, and the Dead Sea Scrolls associated immoral behaviour with impurity.[39] This is different to Sander's view of associating ritually unclean people as sinners. The view expressed in these Jesus writings uses the analogy of uncleanness to express the impurity of sin.

The Didache also associates sin with defilement of the Lord's Supper:

> Assemble on the Lord's Day, and break bread and offer the Eucharist; but first make confession of your faults, so that your sacrifice may be a pure one. Anyone who has a difference with his fellow is not to take part with you until they have been reconciled, so as to avoid any profanation of your sacrifice. (Didache 14:2)

Van de Sant explains that "fights, quibbles, and controversies within the community are regarded as defilement of the Eucharist so warring fellow Christians are to be excluded temporarily from Eucharistic celebration."[40] Purity of fellowship is a concern of Paul's expressed in 1 Corinthians 5 where Paul commands the church to "purge the old leaven". Sin is like leaven, a little can leaven the whole lump.

We may ask at this point that aren't we all sinners? Who is truly worthy of participating in the Lord's Supper? The example of 1 Corinthians 5 and other exclusions from church communal meals are cases of particular sins that are abhorrent and persistent. A man having sexual relations with his father's wife is a disgusting act that brings shame upon the Church and the Lord. Other examples of teaching false doctrine against the fundamental truths of the gospel and the denial of the Father-Son relationship is a heresy that does not belong in the counsel of believers. Fee distinguishes in the case of exclusion from table fellowship the "difference between personal criticism

36 Scott Hafemann discusses the Lord's Supper with fellow scholars in Southern Baptist Journal of Theology's forum (See The SBJT Forum: The Lord's Supper. (Fall 2002) *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 06:3).

37 Huub Van de Sandt, "Do not Give What is Holy to the Dogs' (Did 9:5D and Mat 7:6A): The Eucharistic Food of the Didache in It's Jewish Purity Setting". *Vigiliae Christiane* Vol. 56 No. 3 (August 2002), 230.

38 Ibid, 238.

39 Ibid, 243.

40 Ibid, 243.

and dealing with personal wrongs"[41]. Vosloo's accusation of moral gatekeeping of church discipline excluding members from the Lord's Table may not be wholly convincing but it does highlight that many could use the exclusion from the table as a means of placing legalistic ideals upon members. The exclusion of the member from the Lord's Supper is also not to be the judgement of one man, the minister or the deacons own discretion in distributing the bread and wine. Such judgement must come from the whole church after the correct process instructed in Matthew 18:15-20 has been meticulously followed.

One last caveat that must be highlighted is that there is an open return for the brother or sister to return to the table as long as that person repents of their sin. There must be opportunity for that believer to repent of their wrong and be accepted back into fellowship. In the letter to the angel of Laodicea, Jesus rebukes the Laodiceans for their sins and then offers this invitation:

> 19 Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent. 20 Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me. (Revelation 3:19-20, ESV)

CONCLUSION

The inclusivist reading of the gospel narratives misrepresents Jesus' invitation to join him in the great Messianic banquet in His Kingdom. The principle that Jesus' invitation is "universal in scope, but selective in application" means that the wicked and the unrepentant sinner may not enter the Kingdom. Draper summarises "In other words, I would argue for a more specific focus on and direction towards Jesus' actions in seeking the reign of God than happy meals with sinners".[42]

The accusation of Jesus as "friends of sinners and tax collectors" is also a misrepresentation as the claim is within the same breathe as the accusation that John the Baptist "had a demon" (Matthew 11:18; Luke 7:33). The accusation is a misrepresentation of what Jesus was really doing, which was changing lives, not affirming or tolerating their sin. Inclusivists may argue that this is unloving; however, Richard Hays in his excellent book *The Moral Vision of the New Testament*, writes "love can demand restrictions. God's love cannot be reduced to inclusiveness. Authentic love calls us to repentance, discipline, sacrifice, and transformation (Luke 14:25-35; Hebrews 12:5-13)".[43]

This love must be shown in Church discipline and the principles of Jesus' table fellowship must be realised in our practice of the Lord's Supper. We should no longer let the rhetoric of inclusivists dictate church practice in the ordinance commanded by God. Rather, we should follow the clear example left for us by our Lord, contained in the Gospels, and heed the instructions of the Apostles who have handed them down in the Epistles.

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41 Fee, 1987, 228.

42 Draper, 2007, 3.

43 Richard B. Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament: A Contemporary Introduction to New Testament Ethics*.(London: T&T Clark, 2004), 202.