

Foreword

DR. LANUWABANG JAMIR IS a fine scholar and this is a fine book. In it he offers fresh and helpful perspectives on perhaps the greatest puzzle in Paul's account of the Lord's Supper in 1 Corinthians 11:17–34: the warnings of God's judgment for those who participate unworthily in the meal, and how we should interpret them.

Dr. Jamir's approach is through identifying parallels with the ancient practice of fellowship meals, a practice which is widespread across a number of first-century cultures and societies. A notable contribution of his work is to bring this material together into two helpful chapters, looking at such meals in both Greco-Roman and Jewish settings. He draws out clearly the roles and functions of such meals, including: they bond a community together; their practice marks social divisions and status; they create and reinforce social identity; they have implications for ethical standards and morality in the society and community; they have socio-political implications; and they have "sacred" dimensions in the relationship with God/the gods they presuppose and promote. Most notably for this research, there are judgment themes—both human and divine—associated with such meals.

When Dr. Jamir turns to Corinth, he finds significant and illuminating parallels in Paul's discussions of communal meals, and the Lord's Supper in particular. He offers careful and well-balanced exegesis of the key passages in 1 Corinthians in identifying the nature of the abuse of the meal which the Corinthian believers were practising, and in examining the material on judgment in the context of the Supper (1 Cor 11:27–34). He recognises that the well-recognised socio-economic factors in the Corinthian practice of the Supper provide only a partial explanation of the judgment material, and he locates Paul's teaching in an eschatological context to illuminate the text. He also alerts us to the way Paul redefines fellowship meal practices familiar to his hearers into the context of the Christian gospel, which creates

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and shapes the body of Christ to which the believers belong. Dr. Jamir is sensitive to the Corinthian social and cultural context, and shows Paul to be a theologian and pastor who contextualises his theology into particular settings.

Dr. Jamir's central question not only addresses a fascinating aspect of the exegesis of Paul, but also has significant pastoral implications for Christian understanding of and participation in the eucharist today. Readers who engage with this book and grasp its central argument will find themselves gripped, informed and illuminated, as well as stimulated to reflect on its implications for Christian thinking and practice today—I commend it most warmly.

Steve Walton

Professor of New Testament, St Mary's University, Twickenham (London)

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