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# While they were eating: Lukan mission through domestic hospitality and ministry as table-service, and implications for the contemporary church

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**WHILE THEY WERE EATING: LUKAN MISSION THROUGH  
DOMESTIC HOSPITALITY AND MINISTRY AS TABLE-  
SERVICE, AND IMPLICATIONS FOR THE CONTEMPORARY  
CHURCH**

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## **STATEMENT OF SOURCES**

*This thesis contains no material published elsewhere or extracted in whole or in part from a thesis by which I have qualified or been awarded another degree or diploma.*

*No other person's work has been used without due acknowledgement in the main text of the thesis.*

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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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I dedicate this thesis to my late Mother, Connie, a master host and provider of generous hospitality to many.

## ABSTRACT

The aim of this thesis is to show how in Luke's Gospel, Jesus and the early church relied on food and hospitality provided in homes to propagate the mission of bringing the good news of the kingdom of God to Israel, and subsequently to Gentiles. Secondly, in Luke-Acts provision of meals in homes was also a means of serving Christ and one another through table ministry. These two factors of mission and ministry in Luke through domestic hospitality can provide theological impetus for contemporary Christian communities to think and reflect more intentionally regarding food and hospitality in their own contexts.

Though research and study into the various aspects of food have advanced in recent years through various disciplines, theological research has not been so generous in its handling of food. Although food preparation and cooks have been historically ignored by scholars, it is argued that hospitality is best expressed in the sharing of food. A definition of hospitality that sees its normal and natural expression through the sharing of meals is posited, rather than being defined as "welcoming strangers". Meals are universal "cultural sites" that enable human formation and deepen bonds with others. Food needs to be taken more seriously in the theological enterprise, as does considering food *as* theology.

The Hebrew Bible, ancient Near East, Greco-Roman banquet customs, and intertestamental Jewish literature provide the cultural and historical backdrop for Luke's Gospel. And as such, an engagement with how food and hospitality was regarded within these texts and cultures is examined. Regarding the Hebrew Bible, it will be shown that food and meals played a significant, if not central, role in Israel's covenant identity with Yahweh, and with one another. Special attention is given to whether Jewish groups in this period, as well as Luke's Gospel, were influenced or not by the Greco-Roman banquet tradition of the symposium. The

Greco-Roman Symposium has been offered by scholars as a theory for the basis of Jesus' dining events in Luke, however, this theory was rejected for a number of reasons.

The definition of mission and ministry within the context of Luke-Acts is outlined, and the pre-resurrection domestic meal scenes of the Lukan Jesus are analysed with a narrative theological and socio-scientific approach. The Last Supper, or Eucharist, is deliberately avoided for numerous reasons; one being that the initial remembrance of this event was celebrated within the context of actual domestic meals. Special note of how Jesus acts at table, as well as critical questions concerning whether the author of Luke is using hospitality as a key motif, are explored. This Lukan analysis demonstrates how the mission of Jesus was aided in these domestic settings. Mission in Luke-Acts reflects the actual domestic location of the early house churches Luke was addressing. Through the domestic meal scenes, Luke gives Jesus primacy whenever he is at table and by doing so provides instruction to the banquet communities that are gathering around meals to read/hear the message of Jesus. The *διακονία* of the women who serve Jesus at table is presented favourably by Luke as a way of affirming this ministry in the propagation of the mission of Jesus and the early church.

After briefly placing mission in a contemporary context, the notion of *invitation* in Luke-Acts is discussed with regards to how it may be useful regarding mission in the contemporary secular and pluralistic context in which Western churches find themselves. Secondly, regarding ministry, the sacramental nature of "mundane" work such as food preparation is considered by engaging with the ideas of French philosopher Simone Weil. And finally, a dialogue with a number of authors who have written about the practical application of hospitality for the contemporary context and Christian communities will be engaged in. This heuristic engagement is viewed as a theological "round-table" discussion in the spirit of hospitality, in which a dialogue with these authors, through reflection on the findings of the

analyses of Lukan meal scenes, is undertaken. By reflecting theologically on the motif of hospitality in the mission and ministry of Jesus and the early church in Luke-Acts, the mission and ministry of contemporary churches can be informed and reformed in their own expressions of hospitality.

## ABBREVIATIONS

ABD	Anchor Bible Dictionary
ATR	<i>Anglican Theological Review</i>
BI	<i>Biblical Interpretation</i>
BTB	<i>Biblical Theological Bulletin</i>
EDNT	Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament
ETL	<i>Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses</i>
EQ	<i>Evangelical Quarterly</i>
ExpT	<i>Expository Times</i>
HTR	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
IRM	<i>International Review of Mission</i>
JAAR	<i>Journal of the American Academy of Religion</i>
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JSHJ	<i>Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus</i>
JR	<i>Journal of Religion</i>
JSNT	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
JSOT	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
LNTS	Library of New Testament Studies
NIV	New International Version (1978)
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version (1989)
NSBT	New Studies in Biblical Theology
NT	New Testament
NTS	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
OT	Old Testament
SP	Sacra Pagina
SBL	<i>Society of Biblical Literature</i>
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

STATEMENT OF SOURCES.....	II
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	III
ABSTRACT.....	IV
ABBREVIATIONS.....	VII
<b>INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>1</b>
1. RESEARCH QUESTION AND PURPOSE.....	1
2. STRUCTURE OF THESIS.....	3
3. SIGNIFICANCE OF RESEARCH TOPIC.....	5
4. RELEVANT LITERATURE.....	6
4.1. <i>Introduction</i> .....	6
4.2. <i>Historical Jesus and Commensality with “Sinners”</i> .....	7
4.2.1 Jesus and Jewish Purity Issues.....	12
4.3. <i>Hospitality as Welcoming Strangers</i> .....	15
4.4. <i>Eucharist</i> .....	18
4.5. <i>Conclusion</i> .....	22
<b>CHAPTER 1: HOSPITALITY OVERVIEW AND BACKGROUND.....</b>	<b>24</b>
1. FOOD, COOKS AND THEOLOGY.....	24
1.1. <i>Food and Meals</i> .....	24
1.2. <i>The Snubbing of Cooks</i> .....	28
1.3. <i>Philo and Cooks</i> .....	30
1.4. <i>Theology as Food</i> .....	32
1.5. <i>Conclusions</i> .....	34
2. HEBREW BIBLE, NEAR EAST, AND GRECO-ROMAN BANQUET TRADITION.....	35
2.1. <i>Hebrew Bible and Ancient Near East</i> .....	35
2.1.1. Yahweh: Creation’s Provedore.....	36
2.1.2. Significant Food and Hospitality Motifs.....	40
2.2. <i>The Greco-Roman Banquet Tradition and Jewish Intertestamental Texts</i> .....	45
2.2.1. Intertestamental Literature and Jewish Hospitality.....	47
2.2.2. Essenes and the Therapeutae.....	51
2.3. <i>Conclusions</i> .....	57
<b>CHAPTER 2: MISSION AND MINISTRY IN THE DOMESTIC MEAL SCENES OF LUKE’S GOSPEL.....</b>	<b>59</b>
1. METHODOLOGY.....	59
1.1. <i>Sources and Method (Narrative Theology)</i> .....	61
1.2. <i>Social Scientific Criticism of Luke-Acts</i> .....	63
1.3. <i>Narrative and Social Analysis of the Lukan Theme of Hospitality</i> .....	65
1.4. <i>The Lukan Travel Narrative</i> .....	67
1.5. <i>Audience-Oriented Analysis</i> .....	68
2. MISSION AND MINISTRY IN LUKE-ACTS.....	69
2.1. <i>Mission</i> .....	70
2.1.1. The Gospel of the Kingdom of God.....	70
2.1.2. τὰ ἔθνη.....	76
2.1.3. Definition of Mission.....	79
2.2. <i>Ministry</i> .....	80

2.2.1. Ministry as Service .....	81
2.2.2. Definition of Ministry .....	84
3. DOMESTIC MEAL SCENES .....	84
3.1. <i>Three Table Companions</i> .....	84
4. SIMON PETER’S HOUSE 4:38-41 .....	86
4.1. <i>Households and Hospitality</i> .....	87
5. LEVI’S GREAT BANQUET 5:27-39 .....	91
5.1. <i>Property and Wealth</i> .....	92
6. DINNER WITH SIMON THE PHARISEE 7:36-50 .....	98
7. AT MARY AND MARTHA’S HOUSE 10:38-42.....	106
7.1. <i>Women and Meals</i> .....	111
8. JESUS EATING WITH PHARISEES 11:37-54 .....	117
9. EATING AT A PHARISEE’S HOUSE 14:1-24 .....	124
10. ZACCHAEUS 19: 1-10 .....	133
11. CONCLUSIONS ON MISSION AND MINISTRY IN LUKAN MEAL SCENES.....	138
<b>CHAPTER 3: IMPLICATIONS FOR THE CONTEMPORARY CHURCH.....</b>	<b>143</b>
1: MISSION IN A CONTEMPORARY MILIEU .....	144
2. MINISTRY AS “MUNDANE” SERVICE .....	151
3. PRACTICAL APPROACHES TO HOSPITALITY.....	158
3.1. Distortions and Challenges of Hospitality .....	165
3.2. Personal Reflection .....	171
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY .....</b>	<b>174</b>

# Introduction

## 1. Research Question and Purpose

In this thesis I am proposing and arguing that Luke's Gospel shows that Jesus and the early church relied on food and hospitality provided in homes to propagate the mission of bringing the good news of the kingdom of God to Israel, and subsequently to Gentiles. Secondly, provision of meals in homes was also a means of serving Christ and one another through table ministry, performed mostly by women. This is not to say that hospitality was the *only* means of these things, but simply that hospitality was an *important* means. One writer has suggested that "sharing a table is the first sign of membership in a group",<sup>1</sup> and this appears to be the case in Luke. Furthermore, I am arguing that meals, and subsequently, cooks, have been side-lined in biblical studies on hospitality, as well as in a more general sense historically. For as Christine Pohl observes, inviting others to share food and meals is intrinsic to almost all biblical, historical and contemporary practices of hospitality.<sup>2</sup> While I concur, authors like Pohl tend to focus on hospitality as "the welcome of strangers", which it is in part, I am suggesting that the role of the meal is largely undervalued, as is those who labour in its preparation and service. While hospitality may well be "welcoming strangers", what are we welcoming them to? I am proposing that the table is the pinnacle of the welcome, and that in Luke's domestic meal scenes, mission and ministry transpire.

The fact hospitality has religious, philosophical, cultural, historical, ethical, anthropological, socioeconomic, political and biblical aspects, suggests the need to clarify meaning. However, I will move through some of these aspects but ultimately argue for, and arrive at,

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<sup>1</sup> Massimo Montanari, *Food is Culture: Arts and Traditions of the Table* (New York: Columbia 2004), 94.

<sup>2</sup> Christine D. Pohl, *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 73. In a similar vein, Eugene LaVerdiere states that a "meal, however simple, was considered hospitality's primary expression". Eugene LaVerdiere, *Dining in the Kingdom of God: The Origins of the Eucharist According to Luke* (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1994), 19.

a definition of hospitality that sees its normal and natural expression through the sharing of meals. In other words, while I accept the breadth and depth of the practice of hospitality, I will move it towards a definition that proposes hospitality is most profoundly and practically experienced and enjoyed in the context of meals. That being the case, the role of food preparation and cooking come into sharper focus. And I will argue that although Luke does not explicitly “trumpet” the ministry of table-service, or cooking, he implicitly affirms and elevates it due to the fact that he presents Jesus and the early church depending on such hospitality in supporting the mission. Furthermore, while the ubiquitous definition of biblical hospitality is “welcoming strangers”, I am proposing that we best welcome food-dependant biological creatures by feeding them. That is, strangers need more than a friendly greeting; ultimately they need to eat. That being said, the Lukan Jesus is not posited as someone who eats with strangers, but rather, someone who eats with *anyone*. Thus, in Luke-Acts I would enlarge hospitality defined as “welcoming strangers” to mean “eating with anyone”.

I will thus be proposing that since Luke in his Gospel and in Acts uses domestic hospitality through meals in order to progress the mission of Jesus, contemporary Christian communities can do the same. What this does and can look like will be fleshed out in Chapter 3. However, suffice to say that I believe part of Luke’s use of hospitality as commensality is because that is in fact how the post-Easter communities functioned. Luke presents Jesus in houses and at table so often because that is where the early followers of Jesus were learning, sharing and celebrating the good news of the kingdom of God. Thus the domestic meal scenes in Luke act like a window into the actual domestic meal scenes the early church is participating in.

And finally, the reality of the early church gathering for teaching, fellowship, and ministry primarily in homes is perhaps lost to Western Christians with our centralised buildings.

Moreover, most mainline denominations are accustomed to the Eucharist or Lord's Supper being served by ordained clergy and partaken in church buildings. This was not the experience of the early church. That the church largely functioned in the domestic sphere until around 314C.E. lends credence to the way that Luke used domestic meal settings in Luke-Acts. This is clear in the start of Acts where the risen Jesus gives directives to the apostles while eating with them (1:4).<sup>3</sup> We can imagine an extended table-fellowship in the early house church communities in which the telling of stories of Jesus at table, are actually told and heard at table. Perhaps this is one reason why Luke connects Jesus at table and places a premium on hospitality in his two-volume work.

On a personal note, as a former qualified chef, and an ordained minister, the mutuality between food and hospitality on the one hand, and ministry and mission on the other, is of great interest to me. In this thesis I am seeking to bring together these two professions I have worked in over the past quarter of a century.

## **2. Structure of Thesis**

In using a food analogy regarding the layout of the thesis, the Table of Contents (Menu) would look like this:

### **Appetiser**

Relevant Literature

### **Entree**

Chapter 1: Hospitality: Overview and Background

### **Main**

Chapter 2: Mission and Ministry in the Domestic Meal scenes of Luke's Gospel

### **Dessert**

Chapter 3: Implications for the Contemporary Church

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<sup>3</sup> While συναλιζόμενος can be translated as "assemble", and the infrequent textual variant συναυλιζόμενος (stay with) are possible translations of 1:4, "eating with" is highly plausible. A number of other Lukan allusions to post-resurrection meals with Jesus point in this direction (cf. Lk 24:30-35; 41-43; Acts 10:41).

In Chapter 1 I will consider the historical snubbing of cooks and food preparation, and argue that hospitality is best expressed in the sharing of food. Alongside of this will be consideration of the relationship between theology and food. The Hebrew Bible, ancient Near East, Greco-Roman banquet customs, and intertestamental Jewish literature will be engaged due to the cultural and historical backdrop they provide for Luke's Gospel. Regarding the Hebrew Bible, it will be shown that food and meals played a significant, if not central, role in Israel's covenant identity with Yahweh and with one another. And lastly, special attention will be given to whether Jewish groups in this period, as well as Luke's Gospel, adopted the Greco-Roman banquet tradition of the symposium.

In Chapter 2, methodology for approaching Luke with a narrative theological and socio-scientific approach will be defined, as will the nature of mission and ministry in Luke. Secondly, analyses of seven pre-resurrection domestic meal scenes of Jesus will proceed in order to show how the mission of Jesus occurs in these settings. We will take special note of how Jesus acts at table, and ask critical questions concerning whether the author of Luke in using hospitality as a key motif, ignores or pays attention to ministry as table-service. The role of women and households will also be explored in relation to hospitality. This section shall conclude with a number of summary statements on the findings.

In Chapter 3, I will reflect theologically on the findings of Chapters 1 and 2 in order to consider how contemporary Western Christian communities might apply these findings. This is not intended to be exhaustive, as the major work of the thesis is the Lukan analysis, but I will draw out one major strand each for mission and ministry, as well as overview a number of approaches to hospitality proposed by others. After briefly placing mission in a contemporary context, the practice of *invitation* will be explored as to how it may be useful regarding mission in the contemporary secular and pluralistic context Western churches find themselves. Secondly, regarding ministry, the sacramental nature of "mundane" work such

as food preparation will be considered by engaging with French philosopher Simone Weil's notion of the sacramentality of physical work. And finally, a dialogue with a number of authors who have written about the practical application of hospitality for the contemporary context and Christian communities will be engaged in. This heuristic engagement is viewed as a theological "round-table" discussion in the spirit of hospitality, in which I will seek to converse with these authors through reflection on the findings of the analyses of Lukan meal scenes. The intention to do this is largely motivated by my situation of being a pastoral leader within a Christian community, and thus, the need for theological reflection upon biblical texts in light of contemporary situations is taken seriously. The thesis will conclude with a brief personal reflection.

### **3. Significance of Research Topic**

Though research and study into the various aspects of food have advanced rapidly in recent years through various disciplines, theological research has not been so generous in its handling of food. And as I am arguing that food is at the centre of hospitality, some consideration of this neglect needs exploration. Perhaps the lacunae regarding food in theological studies have occurred for several reasons. Firstly, food is so basic and fundamental to existence, so routine, that its mystery and theological significance can be easily overlooked in favour of the more "weighty" motifs of theology. Secondly, perhaps the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures are so replete with references and analogies to food and hospitality, it is a laborious undertaking to draw coherent themes and conclusions concerning them. Be that though it may, I am proposing that a fresh engagement with hospitality in Luke's Gospel as the locus for mission and ministry can provide a renewed emphasis of the important role hospitality can play in our contemporary ecclesial contexts. Through this study my intention is to encourage churches today to be more intentional about hospitality as the locus of mission and ministry, and to (re)affirm the place of "mundane"

service such as food preparation. But this is not as a new program or a means to an end; hospitality is more the locus for the life of the church, not the means. That is, hospitality is perhaps the singular practice that best embodies and expresses the good news of the kingdom. At least Luke thought so.

## **4. Relevant Literature**

### **4.1. Introduction**

Food and hospitality crosses over into many disciplines for academic research. Regarding biblical texts, the focus on food includes Yahweh as creation's host, the Jewish dietary codes and feasts, Jesus' table-fellowship, fasting, metaphorical imagery and symbolism, and Passover and Eucharistic themes. In relation to wider scholarship, some of the major areas of food and hospitality research are philosophical and ethical, dietary and health, anthropological, cultural, culinary, food production, biological, ecological, and political and justice issues. Thus a literature review on such a wide spectrum is daunting. Furthermore, the case is made in this paper that food and cooks have been consistently ignored in the history of scholarship. Finger, for instance, states that Greco-Roman literary evidence concerning the daily meals of peasants and lower classes is scant.<sup>4</sup> This is mostly due to the fact that almost all Hellenistic literature around the first century was written by and for elite men, and thus "it is impossible to find direct information on lower-class women and meal preparation, serving, eating, and clean-up".<sup>5</sup> Thus, it is difficult to review literature that is not there.

That being the case there are several key themes related to biblical studies of hospitality and the commensality of Jesus that can be reviewed: historical Jesus' contentious commensality,

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<sup>4</sup> Reta Halteman Finger, *Of Widows and Meals: Communal Meals in the Book of Acts* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 121.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 199.



Jewish purity issues, hospitality as welcoming strangers, and the Eucharist. The historicity of Jesus' meals with sinners and Pharisees is not essential for my thesis that meals in homes were a primary means of mission and ministry for the Lukan Jesus and the early church. However, I think the case is strengthened theologically if historicity is established. Secondly, the issue surrounding Jesus' purity at table being consistent or "shocking" within the Jewish framework he lived within is again not vital to establishing my thesis. However, it does impinge on how we might understand Jesus' table-fellowship theologically and therefore will be discussed. Thirdly, the somewhat ubiquitous definition of hospitality as "welcoming strangers" may well be valid in an over-arching biblical view coupled with contemporary views; however, such a definition cannot be established in Luke-Acts. In Luke, Jesus' hospitality would be more accurately described as "eating with anybody", among his fellow Jews. Finally, many studies on Jesus' commensality, food, and meals from a NT viewpoint tend to proceed with a "Eucharistic hermeneutic". That is, discussion on food and meals is mostly moved toward the Eucharist as the "meal of meals". I intend to keep the focus at the level of actual meals, thus avoiding Eucharistic elements altogether. Relevant literature concerning Greco-Roman banquets and Jewish meal customs will be considered in Chapter 1, while literature relating to the methodology employed in studying the Lukan texts will occur in Chapter 2.

#### **4.2. Historical Jesus and Commensality with "Sinners"**

While I will focus solely on Jesus in Luke-Acts regarding hospitality and commensality, I accept that the controversy surrounding Jesus' commensality with "sinners" and toll-collectors does go back to the historical Jesus. A brief scan of some scholarly positions is thus in order.

E.P. Sanders sees the charge of Jesus eating with "sinners and toll-collectors" as authentic, stating "here I can happily join the consensus and agree that Jesus associated with the

wicked and was criticized for it”.<sup>6</sup> Sanders brought to attention the identity of “sinners”, noting that they were not the ‘*amme ha-arets* (“common people” or “people of the land”), but rather, “those who sinned wilfully and heinously and who did not repent”.<sup>7</sup> The ‘*amme ha-arets* were not “irreligious” and paid attention to the law, the festivals, and some purity requirements—just not all of them. And as such they were not “inappropriate companions for ‘table fellowship’”.<sup>8</sup> Thus, according to Sanders, Jesus’ table-fellowship with “sinners” was not an issue of purity, but that he offered “the kingdom to those who *by the normal standards of Judaism were wicked*”, and he did so without requiring conventional Jewish modes of restoration and repentance.<sup>9</sup> Jesus may well have eaten with the “impure”, but it would not have led to his death. Even so, Jesus has table-fellowship with the “wicked”. They may not have killed him for it, thinks Sanders, but it was nonetheless odious to many.<sup>10</sup> Turning momentarily to the Lukan Jesus, Robert Karris’ oft quoted phrase that “*Jesus got himself killed because of the way he ate*”,<sup>11</sup> overstates things. It may be safer to say that “Jesus got himself killed because of what he *promised* those with whom he ate”. The main point with regards to the historical Jesus is this: it was not issues of purity that created controversy over Jesus’ table-fellowship with “sinners”, but that in doing so he was offering them the kingdom. But Sanders’ point fails to take into account that it was most

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<sup>6</sup> Ed P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (London: SCM Press, 1985), 178-79. See also Mark Powell who believes that “[a]lmost all scholars grant that the historical Jesus did in fact eat with tax collectors”. Mark Allan Powell, “Was Jesus a Friend of Unrepentant Sinners? A Fresh Appraisal of Sander’s Controversial Proposal,” *JSHJ* 7, no. 3 (2009): 298. Powell offers an overview of the various criticisms of Sander’s position over the last 25 years and finds them unconvincing. He considers the position of Sanders as still relevant and tenable: “Jesus’ promise of the kingdom to sinners was especially controversial because, in some cases, the included sinners were people who had not stopped sinning or assumed lives compatible with Torah”. *Ibid.*, 308.

<sup>7</sup> Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 177.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 182-83.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 187 (author’s emphasis). Mark Powell draws out the more nuanced aspect of Sander’s claims and states that “Jesus’ friendship with sinners derived not from low moral standards but from a preference for mercy and a vision of divine leniency...Jesus would naturally have *wanted* the wicked to change their ways, but ‘the overall tenor’ of his teaching was ‘compassion toward human frailty’”. Powell, “*Unrepentant Sinners*,” 289.

<sup>10</sup> Powell qualifies that “Sanders does not present Jesus as the proponent of a judgment-free universalism that promises salvation to the wicked *in toto*. It is the sinners who accept or heed Jesus who will be included in the kingdom”. Powell, “*Unrepentant Sinners*,” 289.

<sup>11</sup> Robert J. Karris, *Eating Your Way Through Luke’s Gospel* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2006), 97.

likely *through* table-fellowship that Jesus offered the kingdom to the wicked, and therefore controversy could still have surrounded his commensality.<sup>12</sup> In Chapter 1 we shall see from some anthropological studies, as well as from Jewish texts, that the bonds of kinship are primarily expressed and established through sharing meals. So, while Sanders seems correct on the issue of food purity not being the controversy, even so, the controversy of Jesus offering the kingdom to the wicked by and large takes place at table.

James Dunn, however, notes that the use of the term “sinners” was a disdainful and condemnatory term used by Jewish factions as a way of casting aspersions on their opponent’s interpretations and practices.<sup>13</sup> Therefore, “sinners” was a broad term and not easily defined. He agrees with Sanders that it generally connotes law-breakers, or “deliberate and unrepentant transgressors of the law,” however, its use by various Jewish factional groups of each other “does not denote non-practicing, law-defiant Jews...but Jews who practised their Judaism *differently* from the writer’s faction.”<sup>14</sup> Mark Powell persuasively counters Dunn’s stance that the “sinners” Jesus ate with were not regarded as wicked, but only as factional sects not approved of by the Pharisees. His reasoning is that “the people”, and not just Pharisees are highlighted as condemning Jesus’ eating with sinners (cf. Lk 19:7), that the Pharisees complain to Jesus’ disciples which indicates that they believed others outside their own group would also have issues with Jesus’ table companions, and finally, the Gospel writers themselves call Jesus’ table-guests “sinners” (cf. Mt. 9.10; Mk 2.15).<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Although, he does acknowledge that the Last Supper “symbolised” the kingdom. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 307, 340. Powell, too, is surprised that Sanders’ misses this point which, he thinks, would strengthen Sander’s argument. “Sanders presents Jesus as a prophet who performs such acts but does not include the meals with sinners among the examples of prophetic acts that he lists...[, and] ‘banquets with sinners’ would seem to convey a prophetic claim that such persons were to be included in God’s kingdom.” Powell, “*Unrepentant Sinners*,” 300.

<sup>13</sup> James D. G. Dunn, “Jesus and Purity: An Ongoing Debate,” *NTS* 48, no. 4 (2002): 465.

<sup>14</sup> James D. G. Dunn, *Jesus Remembered* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 530.

<sup>15</sup> Powell, “*Unrepentant Sinners*,” 299.

Sanders also saw a discontinuation between Jesus' table-fellowship with sinners and the practice of the early church. That is, there are Gentile "sinners" in the early church, but not Jewish ones ("the wicked").<sup>16</sup> This may well be the case, however, the important point for this study is that in both Jewish and Gentile cases commensality, and thus a meal, signifies and establishes the domestic hospitality of the home as a primary means of mission. The identity of the people at table is secondary to the fact that they were at table.

Andrew McGowan rejects the general assumption that Jesus was executed because of the way he ate and believes that attempts to depict Jesus' eating habits as dangerous and revolutionary import inaccurate caricatures of Judaism.<sup>17</sup> Reta Halteman Finger sees the historical Jesus as having a particular agenda in open commensality to challenge social and religious exclusivism,<sup>18</sup> and maintains that Jesus displayed an open table to those who were outsiders, but also to perceived adversaries such as Pharisees.<sup>19</sup> And Finger thinks it is likely that the historical Jesus ate with immoral people.<sup>20</sup> John Koenig also accepts the controversy surrounding Jesus' commensality and maintains that Jesus' eclectic and diverse meal companions were construed by some as "immoral",<sup>21</sup> while Luke Bretherton makes a similar claim that Jesus' commensality "turns the world upside down".<sup>22</sup> John Dominic Crossan has described Jesus as a *peasant Jewish Cynic* whose strategy for himself and his followers "was the combination of *free healing and common eating*, a religious and economic egalitarianism that negated alike and at once the hierarchical and patronal normalcies of Jewish religion and Roman power...He announced...the brokerless kingdom

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<sup>16</sup> Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 209-11, 324.

<sup>17</sup> Andrew McGowan, "Dangerous Eating?," *Liturgy* 20, no. 4 (2005): 15-17.

<sup>18</sup> Finger, *Of Widows*, 184.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 163.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 185.

<sup>21</sup> John Koenig, *New Testament Hospitality: Partnership with Strangers as Promise and Mission* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 26.

<sup>22</sup> Luke Bretherton, *Hospitality as Holiness: Christian Witness Amid Moral Diversity* (Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing, 2006), 129. See also McGowan who states that "Contemporary New Testament Theology often affirms that the meal practice of Jesus was inclusive, radical, and even dangerous". McGowan, "Dangerous Eating?," 14.

of God”.<sup>23</sup> And Finger notes that for Crossan, this egalitarianism is best expressed through Jesus’ open commensality which was central to his mission.<sup>24</sup>

Dennis Smith, on the other hand, is largely sceptical about the historicity of Synoptic depictions of Jesus’ dining encounters, seeing them in idealised and symbolic terms. For Smith, Mark’s account of the last supper is a “creation of the gospel writer” and the communal meals of later Christians were their own development without antecedents to the historical Jesus.<sup>25</sup> Kathleen Corley challenges the widespread notion of Jesus’ table-fellowship with sinners by arguing that the term “prostitute” in the NT most likely refers to the emancipated women of Greco-Roman culture who broke with convention and attended banquets, as opposed to literal prostitutes.<sup>26</sup> “If Corley is right,” notes Craig Blomberg, “then a key piece of the consensus that Jesus fraternized with the worst of his society’s outcasts is undermined.”<sup>27</sup> But from a textual perspective, Blomberg notes that the texts surrounding Jesus’ contentious commensality satisfy the older dissimilarity criterion, the test for multiple attestation, the criterion of coherence, and the contemporary double similarity and dissimilarity criterion. Blomberg concludes that “we may remain confident

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<sup>23</sup> John D. Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (San Francisco: Harper, 1991), 421-22 (emphasis author’s).

<sup>24</sup> Finger, *Of Widows*, 186. For an extensive and thorough review of table-fellowship and the historical Jesus regarding the positions of Sanders, Smith, Corley, and Crossan, see Mary J. Marshall, “Jesus and the Banquets: An Investigation of the Early Christian Tradition Concerning Jesus’ Presence at Banquets with Toll Collectors and Sinners” (PhD, Murdoch University, 2002), 26-54. For an overview of historical Jesus studies in recent decades, see Craig A. Evans, “Assessing Progress in the Third Quest of the Historical Jesus,” *JSHJ* 4, no. 1 (2006).

<sup>25</sup> Dennis E. Smith, “Table Fellowship and the Historical Jesus,” in *Religious Propaganda and Missionary Competition in the New Testament World: Essays Honoring Dieter Georgi*, ed. D. Georgi, et al. (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994). See also Dennis E. Smith, “Table Fellowship as a Literary Motif in the Gospel of Luke,” *JBL* 106, no. 4 (1987).

<sup>26</sup> Kathleen E. Corley, *Private Women Public Meals: Social Conflict in the Synoptic Tradition* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1993), 184.

<sup>27</sup> Among other convincing rebuttals to Corley, Blomberg states that even if the terms were used in a broader sense this does not show that the Gospels do not portray literal tax collectors and prostitutes. Secondly evidence from Josephus and the Babylonian Talmud link these two terms together as supreme examples of the worst of Jewish collaborators with the Romans. And finally, even if the terms were used in a non-literal way they “still represent serious vilification, such that its targets were being viewed as wicked.” Craig L. Blomberg, *Contagious Holiness: Jesus’ Meals with Sinners*, NSBT (Downers Grove: Intervarsity, 2005), 23.

that Jesus' table-fellowship with sinners reflects an important historical core of the canonical Gospel tradition."<sup>28</sup> Lastly, Joachim Jeremias maintained that

Jesus' meals with the publicans and sinners...are an expression of the mission and message of Jesus (Mark 2:17), eschatological meals, anticipatory celebrations of the feast in the end time (Matt 8:11 par.), in which the community of the saints is already being represented (Mark 2:19). The inclusion of sinners in the community of salvation, achieved in table fellowship, is the most meaningful expression of the message of the redeeming love of God.<sup>29</sup>

#### 4.2.1 Jesus and Jewish Purity Issues

While it may be the case that issues of purity were not the primary cause of Jewish opposition to Jesus, there can be no doubt that issues of purity were of extreme importance for Jews. By the time of first-century Judaism, issues and concerns regarding purity limited commensality and set it within a framework of clean and unclean in terms of both food and guests. This is highlighted by the fact that 229 of the 341 rabbinic rules connected to Shammai and Hillel have to do with table-fellowship, and that the levels of purity regarding food and meals practised by Temple priests were inculcated by Pharisees in their homes. Moreover, during and after the Exile, Jews equated holiness with separation, and as such Feeley-Harnick's claim is correct that in the intertestamental period, "food law came to represent the whole law",<sup>30</sup> therefore, as Finger notes, "disputes about commensality concerned the shape of the community that was truly loyal to Yahweh".<sup>31</sup>

So did Jesus' eating habits, and those of the early church, continue or discontinue Jewish notions of purity? Is it as Bretherton suggests that Jesus' hospitality was "shocking" regarding Hebrew Bible precedents and also precipitated conflict with "the custodians of

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 129. We could also add here the criterion of embarrassment as presented by John Meier, for Jesus being labelled a "glutton and drunkard" could well fit under this criterion. John P. Meier, "Criteria: How Do We Decide What Comes From Jesus?," in *The Historical Jesus in Recent Research*, ed. J.D.G. Dunn and S. McKnight (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2005), 126-129.

<sup>29</sup> Joachim Jeremias, *New Testament Theology: The Proclamation of Jesus* (New York: Scribner, 1971), 115-16.

<sup>30</sup> Gillian Feeley-Harnik, *The Lord's Table: Eucharist and Passover in Early Christianity, Symbol and Culture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981), 164.

<sup>31</sup> Finger, *Of Widows*, 178.

Israel's purity"?<sup>32</sup> Jerome Neyrey takes this conflict a step further by advancing that Jesus abrogated the central boundary marker of the kosher diet.<sup>33</sup> In further analysis, Eyal Regev expresses the widely held view that Jesus' statement about "all foods pure" in Mark 7:19c is most certainly a gloss and that the Synoptics do not explicitly deny the Levitical purity system. Regev maintains there is no conflict between Jesus' remarks concerning defilement in Mark 7:15 and Matt 15:1 and rabbinic halakhah, because the general rabbinic consensus was that "according to Scripture, impure food cannot defile one who eats it, with the exception of the carcass of a clean (i.e., kosher) bird."<sup>34</sup> With regards to Jewish dietary laws, David Rudolph argues that Jesus was by no means radically abandoning them in his life and teaching, and suggests that Luke depicts Jesus as one whose parents were pious Jews, and that he affirmed Jewish identity markers regarding diet.<sup>35</sup> Rudolph goes on to say that "Jesus was a Torah faithful Jew who observed the biblical dietary laws and that his disciples (all Jews!) did the same as well".<sup>36</sup> In a larger conversation concerning the tensions between Pharisees and Jesus, N.T. Wright suggests that Jesus could not have directly and publicly denounced Jewish food taboos, for to do so would have incited riots.<sup>37</sup>

Sanders claims there is no "evidence that the significance of Jesus' eating with sinners has to do primarily with purity".<sup>38</sup> Sanders points to the prominence of debate concerning Sabbath and food in Paul's letters as evidence that the early church did not have a tradition going back to Jesus on these matters, and therefore Jesus did not abrogate the law on these issues.<sup>39</sup> Dunn shows that in the intertestamental period Jewish heroes and heroines were

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<sup>32</sup> Bretherton, *Hospitality as Holiness*, 130.

<sup>33</sup> Jerome H. Neyrey, "Meals, Food, and Table Fellowship," in *The Social Sciences and New Testament Interpretation*, ed. Richard Rohrbaugh (Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 1996), 159.

<sup>34</sup> Eyal Regev, "Moral Impurity and the Temple in Early Christianity in Light of Ancient Greek Practice and Qumranic Ideology," *HTR* 97, no. 4 (2004): 384-385.

<sup>35</sup> David J. Rudolph, "Jesus and the Food Laws: A Reassessment of Mark 7:19b," *EQ* 74, no. 4 (2002): 309.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 310.

<sup>37</sup> Nicholas T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (London: SPCK, 1996). 398.

<sup>38</sup> Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 209.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 325.

consistently “portrayed as prospering precisely because of their loyalty to the food laws and their refusal to eat the food of Gentiles.”<sup>40</sup> And Esler notes that eating with Gentiles, though not specifically forbidden by Moses, teetered on the edge of transgressing the purity code, which was an essential component of Mosaic Law that upheld and maintained the boundaries of Jewish identity and separateness.<sup>41</sup> Moreover, Peter Tomson argues persuasively that the pre 70 C.E. texts of the NT do not display an outright rejection of Jewish dietary laws and that this arose after 70 C.E. and was finalised by the Church Fathers from the third century onwards. Therefore, even though after the Great War anti-Jewish sentiment was increasing, it was only after the Bar Kokhba War (132-135 C.E.) that churches rejected Jewish food laws.<sup>42</sup>

Bretherton believes that Jesus’ expression of hospitality is both a continuation and a discontinuation of Israel’s practices and customs. It is a continuation of the exhortations and commandments in the Hebrew Bible to show hospitality to strangers, but a discontinuation regarding understandings of purity and holiness. Bretherton suggests that by welcoming and eating with sinners and the unclean, Jesus is demonstrating true holiness by way of hospitality.<sup>43</sup> Extending the discussion of Jesus and holiness, Blomberg persuasively argues that what emerges from a study of Jesus’ table-fellowship is best defined by the phrase “contagious holiness”.<sup>44</sup> Observing that Jesus’ open commensality was tempered by calling people to change and to become his disciples, Blomberg believes that Jesus had kingdom purposes in mind when at table.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 275.

<sup>41</sup> Philip Francis Esler, *Community and Gospel in Luke-Acts: The Social and Political Motivations of Lucan Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 84.

<sup>42</sup> Peter J. Tomson, “Jewish Food Laws in Early Christian Community Discourse,” *Semeia*, no. 86 (1999): 193.

<sup>43</sup> Bretherton, *Hospitality as Holiness*, 130.

<sup>44</sup> Blomberg, *Contagious Holiness*, 128.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 129.



And finally, Esler argues that the issue of table-fellowship between Jews and Gentiles is a primary consideration when considering the community for whom Luke wrote, and that the universal failure in appreciating the centrality of table-fellowship in Luke has been a “serious deficiency in Lucan scholarship”.<sup>46</sup> Thus it appears that some of the perceptions of Jesus radically breaking with general Jewish requirements concerning purity have been overstated. That the challenges of Jewish-Gentile table-fellowship were an issue for the early church is clear, and we shall deal with the issue of Gentiles in Luke in Chapter 2.

### 4.3. Hospitality as Welcoming Strangers

One of the key motifs of biblical hospitality is that of the stranger (cf. Deut 10:18-19; Lev 19:33-34; Mt 25:35; Heb 13:2). Thus Hans Boersma suggests that Torah injunctions to care for strangers are reflective of Israel’s own experience of God’s hospitality toward them as a “tribe of strangers”.<sup>47</sup> Mary Marshall observes that this definition was not present only within Israel, but was present within the wider Near Eastern culture as being generally defined as “friendship toward strangers, as reflected in the Greek term φιλοξενία which means literally *love of foreigners, strangers, or enemies*”.<sup>48</sup> Koenig notes that in a more general sense, the word ξένος can mean guest, host, or stranger.<sup>49</sup> Koenig uses the phrase “partnership with strangers” as a key descriptor of NT hospitality which portrays the way reciprocal host/guest relationships are founded and maintained through mutual welcome.<sup>50</sup> He adds further that, “we might call hospitality the catalyst for creating and sustaining partnerships in the gospel. Within these partnerships all members, even God as director, will

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<sup>46</sup> Esler, *Community and Gospel*, 71.

<sup>47</sup> Hans Boersma, *Violence, Hospitality, and the Cross: Reappropriating the Atonement Tradition* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 57.

<sup>48</sup> Mary J. Marshall, “Jesus: Glutton and Drunkard?,” *JSHJ* 3, no. 1 (2005): 48 (emphasis author’s).

<sup>49</sup> Koenig, *New Testament Hospitality*, 8. See also Andrew Artebury, *Entertaining Angels: Early Christian Hospitality in its Mediterranean Setting* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2005), 130. In the NT, however, the sense of “foreign” is the primary definition, and Luke’s only use of the term comes from the mouths of Epicurean and Stoic philosophers at the meeting of the Aeropagus (AC 17:18, 20). Moreover, the secular Greek definition of the “friendly guest” is absent from the NT. J.H. Friedrich, “ξένος,” in *EDNT*, ed. H.R. Balz and G. Schneider (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990-1993), 486.

<sup>50</sup> Koenig, *New Testament Hospitality*, 8.

play the role of stranger”.<sup>51</sup> Artebury, however, highlights perceived weaknesses in Koenig’s definition of hospitality as being too narrow, regarding “strangers” as the only recipients of hospitality, and confusing texts that refer to ancient hospitality with those that don’t.<sup>52</sup> And this is the caution we must heed in relation to the “hospitality as welcoming strangers” motif in Luke; it is absent. The homes Jesus enters and the people he encounters at table are in every case Jewish. Some may well be considered strangers and outsiders *within* the Jewish community, but they were not strangers in the sense of foreigners or enemies. Hobbs, also eschews what he terms the generally accepted romantic view of hospitality as being kind to strangers, and suggests modern commentators too readily commit a “teleological fallacy” where ancient sources are used as a “springboard for a modern polemic”.<sup>53</sup> Hobbs highlights the difference in Israelite society between the *gērîm* (stranger) and *nokrî* (foreigner) where the former has access to the sanctuary and is entitled to residence within Israel, the latter, however, is an “invader”, “desecrator” and “polluter”.<sup>54</sup> Hobbs notes that in the Hebrew Bible, only one such possible incidence of hospitality being offered to a *nokrî* is evident in 2 Kings 6:21-24 where Elisha counsels that the captive Syrian raiding party be fed, watered, and returned home. The action, however, is interpreted by the king of Syria as a “slight to his honour”, not as a gesture of hospitality.<sup>55</sup> Hobbs argues that the *nokrî* are never shown hospitality and thus, a more careful reading of the contexts concerning hospitality in the OT will help to “avoid such generalizations as the identity of the guest as the universal “stranger”.<sup>56</sup> In summarising a survey on meals in the Hebrew Bible, Blomberg observes that there is a theme of inclusiveness, however, apostate Israelites and foreign enemies are always excluded.<sup>57</sup> He adds that there is not one

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>52</sup> Artebury, *Entertaining Angels*, 5.

<sup>53</sup> T. R. Hobbs, “Hospitality in the First Testament and the ‘Teleological Fallacy’,” *JSOT* 95(2001): 5-6.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 29.

<sup>57</sup> Blomberg, *Contagious Holiness*, 63.

occurrence of “the ‘uninvited guest’ characteristic of later Greek *symposia*...or of faithful Israelites taking the initiative to seek out the ritually or morally stigmatized of their society for inclusion in table fellowship, as would later characterize Jesus’ practice”.<sup>58</sup>

Oden follows others who define hospitality to mean the welcoming of the stranger by stating that “Christian biblical and historical traditions [have] focussed on receiving the alien and extending one’s resources to them. Hospitality responds to the physical, social, and spiritual needs of the stranger”.<sup>59</sup> Thomas Ogletree also propounds the stranger motif and suggests that it is intrinsically connected to the actual practice of providing, among other things, physical needs such as shelter and food, especially in hostile places.<sup>60</sup> Bretherton also believes that Jesus continues Israel’s practices and customs to show hospitality to strangers, and he defines the stranger in the Bible as “not simply someone who is different, instead, there is a consistent and special concern for the vulnerable stranger, for example, the poor, the sick, and the refugee”.<sup>61</sup> And finally, Sutherland states that at the centre of the gospel is the reality that a divine act of hospitality has enabled those who were once enemies and strangers to be reconciled with God.<sup>62</sup>

So while I am not proposing the notion of hospitality as “welcoming strangers” is to be rejected, it is important to draw out the subtler nuances present within the Hebrew Bible. And as such, we shall see in Luke’s Gospel that the notion of the stranger is not central to the hospitality and meal practices of Jesus. What can be said of hospitality in Luke is not that Jesus eats with strangers per se, but that he eats with *anyone*: rich, poor, women, men, “sinful” and “righteous”. Be that though it may, Luke only presents Jesus at table with other

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 64.

<sup>59</sup> Amy G. Oden, *And You Welcomed Me: A Sourcebook on Hospitality in Early Christianity* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2001), 14.

<sup>60</sup> Thomas W. Ogletree, *Hospitality to the Stranger: Dimensions of Moral Understanding* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 2.

<sup>61</sup> Bretherton, *Hospitality as Holiness*, 141.

<sup>62</sup> Arthur Sutherland, *I Was a Stranger: A Christian Theology of Hospitality* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2006), 26.

Jews. The inclusion of Gentiles at table happens later in Acts. This is not to suggest that Luke believed Jesus meant to exclude Gentiles, but only that the mission of Jesus and the early church is one of chronological unfolding.

Furthermore, in defining hospitality as meal-sharing, which is in fact what I will propose later, the motif of welcoming strangers is subsumed within it. That is, by eating with someone in your home or theirs, it is axiomatic that both host and guest no longer remain strangers. Therefore, I am suggesting that “welcoming strangers” is less helpful in defining hospitality in Luke than is “eating with anyone”.

#### **4.4. Eucharist<sup>63</sup>**

For many Christians the role of meals and food in connection with Jesus finds fulfilment and ultimate expression at the Eucharist, or Last Supper. There can be no doubt of the importance of this meal for the entire history of the church, and also in Luke. Koenig summarises the Lukan Last Supper as “the meal of meals”,<sup>64</sup> while Eugene LaVerdiere sees all of the Lukan meals as being Eucharistic in some form for the “Eucharist is the supreme expression of...hospitality”.<sup>65</sup> LaVerdiere states that this meal in Luke is the most important of all the meal scenes as well as being the “climactic meal recapitulating the previous seven [meals]”.<sup>66</sup> This may be true from a retrospective analysis viewed through church history and tradition; however, Luke-Acts makes no such claims about the role of the Last Supper. Koenig, too thinks LaVerdiere’s Eucharistic classification of all Lukan meal scenes is

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<sup>63</sup> For an extensive bibliography on the Last Supper/Eucharist concerning Luke, see John Nolland, *Luke 18:35-24:53*, vol. 35C, WBC (Dallas: Word, 1993), 1035–40. For an anthropological perspective exploring the role of food in Jewish and Christian understanding, and the way Christians expanded the Passover in more inclusive ways, see Feeley-Harnik, *Lord’s Table*. For the development and understanding of the eucharist in medieval times see Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 48-69. For a thorough biblical overview of the origins of the eucharist with regards to the church’s mission see John Koenig, *The Feast of the World’s Redemption: Eucharistic Origins and Christian Mission* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 2000).

<sup>64</sup> Koenig, *New Testament Hospitality*, 118-19.

<sup>65</sup> LaVerdiere, *Dining in the Kingdom*, 9. So also Harley can say that the “highest moment of Christian worship is the Eucharist”. John E. Hartley, *Leviticus*, vol. 4, WBC (Dallas: Word, 2002), 102.

<sup>66</sup> LaVerdiere, *Dining in the Kingdom*, 21-22.

somewhat “over precise”.<sup>67</sup> Moreover, LaVerdiere believes that for Luke, “the Eucharist is a *gospel event*”,<sup>68</sup> and, as “a memorial of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and as the Lord’s Supper, the Eucharist is at the very heart of that gospel.”<sup>69</sup> I would not contend with these claims, but only add that *all* of Luke’s meal scenes are equally “gospel events”. I think this is consistent with Luke-Acts with regards to the fact that Luke does not directly refer to the Last Supper in Acts. If, as others have claimed, the Passover meal of Lk 22:7-23 is the central and most important meal for Luke, then why not mention it directly in Acts?

Of course, we know the direction the church moved in interpreting Jesus’ words of institution; but in the one description we have of an actual Last/Lord’s Supper in early Christian practice, it certainly looks like it took place either as a meal, or in the context of a meal (1 Cor 11:17-34). Finger has reviewed scholarship since the 19<sup>th</sup> century concerning the origin of the Eucharist and its relation to the agape meals, and contends, with ample evidence, for the historicity of the agape meal tradition spreading far beyond Jerusalem and lasting for hundreds of years.<sup>70</sup> She accepts that there was “only one meal tradition, where the Eucharist...was celebrated in the context of a communal meal at which everyone, poor and less poor, ate.”<sup>71</sup> As John Koenig has noted in his extensive study on the origin of the Eucharist, it was within the context of actual meals that the Lord’s Supper was shared.<sup>72</sup> Koenig comments elsewhere that “reflections on Eucharistic hospitality in the New Testament presuppose a house church setting.”<sup>73</sup> Enrico Mazza makes this same observation, and notes that it was as early as the second century that the supper aspect was severed from the rite.<sup>74</sup> In discussion on the *agape* or “love feast”, Osiek and Balch note that

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<sup>67</sup> Koenig, *Eucharistic Origins*, 186.

<sup>68</sup> LaVerdiere, *Dining in the Kingdom*, 1.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>70</sup> Finger, *Of Widows*, 48-79.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 278.

<sup>72</sup> Koenig, *Eucharistic Origins*, 231.

<sup>73</sup> Koenig, *New Testament Hospitality*, 127.

<sup>74</sup> Enrico Mazza, *The Celebration of the Eucharist: The Origin of the Rite and the Development of its Interpretation* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1999), 21. See also Joseph Ysebaert who states that the “eating

numerous “scholars think that in the early years, Eucharist and agape were the same event, but they became distinct later.”<sup>75</sup> Along these lines Symons argues that the love-feast of the NT with the centrality of the meal, morphs over time into a more sacramental form, with “the banquet evaporating into the slimmest of wafers and most reverential sips of wine”.<sup>76</sup> Moreover, while the Lukan phrase κλάσαι ἄρτον (broke bread: cf. Lk 24:35; Acts 20:7; 27:35<sup>77</sup>), is considered by some as having Eucharistic connotations, the sharing of ordinary meals is implied by Luke. Finger notes that τῇ κλάσει τοῦ ἄρτου is a type of ancient custom that precipitated a proper meal, and that in Palestinian culture, all meals had religious and social significance.<sup>78</sup> Witherington believes that “broke bread” could well refer to an ordinary meal, but suggests its usage “seems to be a primitive way of alluding to the Lord’s Supper, though it cannot be ruled out that the reference is to an ordinary meal.”<sup>79</sup> And Koenig is of the firm view that while an overlap of the terms “Lord’s Supper” and “break bread” had Eucharistic connotations by the mid first century, “Acts 2:46 shows that the phrase “breaking of bread” also designated *daily* meals”.<sup>80</sup>

So here is a summary of why I purposely want to omit the Eucharistic in analysis of Lukan meals. Firstly, the Eucharist has received extensive coverage throughout Christian history, while the role of food and hospitality has received less. Secondly, the Eucharist is largely

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and drinking of the Eucharist substituted the Jewish Passover and was as any sacrificial meal in antiquity a full meal”. Joseph Ysebaert, “The Eucharist as a Love-meal (agape) in Didache 9-10, and Its Development in the Pauline and in the Syrian Tradition,” in *Apostolic Age in Patristic Thought*, ed. A Hilhorst (Leiden: Brill Academic, 2004), 26.

<sup>75</sup> Carolyn Osiek and David L. Balch, *Families in the New Testament World: Households and House Churches* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1997), 212.

<sup>76</sup> Michael Symons, “Eating into Thinking: Explorations into the Sociology of Cuisine” (PhD, Flinders University, 1991), 140. For an overview of some of the aspects of the way the Last Supper morphed into the Mass, see Ben Witherington, *Making a Meal of It: Rethinking the Theology of the Lord’s Supper* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2007), 113-25.

<sup>77</sup> This occurrence alone seems to dismiss Luke’s apparent Eucharistic allusions due to the fact that it describes Paul’s meal with pagan sailors. For a more detailed rebuttal of 27:35 being Eucharistic, see Ben Witherington, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 772–73.

<sup>78</sup> Finger, *Of Widows*, 229-30.

<sup>79</sup> Witherington, *Acts of the Apostles*, 160-61. Nolland views that the “breaking of bread” phrase used by Luke “speak[s] of the eucharistic practice of the early church.” Nolland, *Luke 18:35-24:53*, 1207.

<sup>80</sup> Koenig, *Eucharistic Origins*, 92-93. See also Luke Timothy Johnson who notes the “common meal” aspect of the Lord’s Supper, Luke Timothy Johnson, *Among the Gentiles: Greco-Roman Religion and Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 139 and n.71.

celebrated in liturgical and ritualistic ways in contemporary practice; I want to keep the focus on food and hospitality in the Gospel of Luke without the later layers of symbolism and sacramentalism. This is because I want to reaffirm the domestic sphere and the ministry of hospitality through food preparation as sacramental in and of themselves. As Pohl notes in a discussion about shared meals in community, “even separate from the Eucharist, one often senses a divine mystery in dining together at a table of welcome”.<sup>81</sup> And while Blomberg seeks to increase the significance of the Eucharist, he also advocates that we “‘sacramentalize’ the significance of other fellowship meals, *when Christians celebrate them intentionally for the sake of creating greater intimacy with fellow human beings or reconciling them to each other and to God.*”<sup>82</sup> I agree entirely, and do not want to minimise the importance of the Eucharist for Christians today, but just move it to one side while we consider actual meals. This is hard for Christians to do, as is seen when Shannon Jung, who calls the Eucharist “the Master Practice”, suggests that “One way to live out the communal reality of Communion [or Eucharist] is to eat together after the sacrament”.<sup>83</sup> Such a binary concept would be foreign to the Lukan audience. Thirdly, the very fact that Luke repeatedly uses meals and hospitality as a motif in both his Gospel and Acts signify the importance of the meal itself. And finally, the common tendency to move analysis and discussion concerning food and hospitality to the Eucharist embeds and reinforces a clergy-centric practice that reinforces two classes of minister within the church. If, however, any Christian can offer ministry through food and hospitality, then this opens up the ministry to all. For if, as Henri de Lubac has suggested, the “Eucharist makes the church”,<sup>84</sup> then by logical inference, it can only be priests and clergy who serve the meal; others are excluded. And as Lane has shown, there is “no evidence for a sacramental interpretation of the Eucharist, in

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<sup>81</sup> Pohl, *Making Room*, 74-75.

<sup>82</sup> Blomberg, *Contagious Holiness*, 179 (emphasis author’s).

<sup>83</sup> Shannon L. Jung, *Sharing Food: Christian Practices for Enjoyment* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006), 135.

<sup>84</sup> John Koenig, *Soul Banquets: How Meals Become Mission in the Local Congregation* (Harrisburg: Morehouse, 2007), 88-89.

which the Lord's table is described as an altar, until [late 2nd century]".<sup>85</sup> And as Witherington notes that with the ritualising of the Eucharist and the centrality of the priest in its distribution, it "ceases to have the same function and social significance it had in early Christianity— a true meal shared by Christians and fostering *koinōnia* or communion with one's lord and one's fellow disciples".<sup>86</sup>

#### 4.5. Conclusion

To summarise these several areas that impinge on this thesis, we can assert the following. Firstly, that there was controversy to some degree surrounding the historical Jesus' commensality is highly probable. Whether this was because of purity issues is less likely than the controversy being connected to what Jesus offered "sinners" by eating with them. But either way, there was definitely controversy of sorts regarding Jesus at table. What we will see with regards to the Lukan Jesus is that this controversy around commensality is frequent, but also that Luke emphasises repentance more so than was the case for the historical Jesus.

Secondly, there are diverging opinions on the matter of Jesus' commensality and Jewish purity. What is clear is that many Jews of the period took kosher laws and prohibition of table-fellowship with the unclean extremely seriously. While it appears to be the case that Jesus did not radically depart from the dietary aspects, and nor in Luke does he eat with Gentiles, there were on-going challenges for the early church with regards to Jewish-Gentile table fellowship.

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<sup>85</sup> William L. Lane, *Hebrews 9-13*, vol. 47B, WBC (Dallas: Word, 2002), 538.

<sup>86</sup> Witherington, *Making a Meal of It*, 114. See also Thomas O'Loughlin who states that "we need a more all-embracing notion of sacramentality of Christians eating at table than one where a sacramental dimension is linked to ritual, or even ceremonial, form". Thomas O'Loughlin, "Post-resurrection Meal and its Implications for the Early Understanding of the Eucharist," *Transformation: An International Journal of Holistic Mission Studies* 25, no. 1 (2008): 9.



Thirdly, while the understanding of hospitality as “welcoming strangers” is widespread among scholars, the definition has at times failed to portray the distinctive nuances of the term in Hebrew Bible. There can be no doubt that the notion of strangers is implicit within ancient understandings of hospitality. However, it is a term that cannot be utilised in a universal sense regarding hospitality. Notwithstanding, the issue of hospitality and “strangers” is not important in Luke-Acts as it is not used by Luke to describe hospitality, nor is it used concerning the commensality of Jesus or the early church. In Luke, Jesus will not eat with “strangers” in the sense of the term meaning “foreigners”.

Finally, the Eucharist is undoubtedly of special significance for most Christians. The decision to not include the Last Supper meal of Luke 22:7-22 is based upon the general consensus of scholars that there was an actual meal tradition that was part of the Lord’s/Last Supper remembrance. And it is the more “mundane” aspects of meals and food preparation that I want to focus on in the Lukan meal scenes. Moreover, the Lukan meal scenes cannot be retrospectively imbued with Eucharistic overtones from the standpoint of ecclesial history. Taken at face value, Luke-Acts makes no direct or significant claims for interpreting every meal scene as having Eucharistic allusions.

# Chapter 1: Hospitality Overview and Background

## 1. Food, Cooks and Theology

While hospitality is not defined by, or limited to the sharing of food, in a very concrete and practical way, food sharing is the logical and practical manifestation of the practice of hospitality. This is because humans eat and drink every day and this practice is fundamental to our very survival.<sup>87</sup> I am positing that while hospitality is not solely the sharing of food, meals are inevitably the practical and universal outworking of hospitality. For if one takes seriously the material nature of human beings, our utter dependence on food for life, then to welcome someone and to extend hospitality to them would most practically be expressed through providing food.

Therefore, I am proposing a conflation of the phrase “food and hospitality” to mean just “hospitality”. That is, sharing food through commensality belongs as an inseparable part of practising hospitality. We will begin by looking in a general sense at the universality of meals as places of social bonding and cultural formation.

### 1.1. Food and Meals

Eating is the universal language. Plankton, plants, parrots and primates all share it. For carbon-based life forms, food is life and its absence is death. Food unifies people and precipitates wars.<sup>88</sup> The human need for, and dependence on food is a universal truth.<sup>89</sup> As

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<sup>87</sup> See Robert Forster and Orest Ranum who have argued that the historical study of food is important because it is “the most basic of human needs, and obtaining enough of it has been the most pervasive human activity since “Dawn Man”. They also add that a “study of food habits in the broader sense serves as a useful point of entry into an investigation of a wider culture”. Robert Forster and Orest Ranum, eds., *Food and Drink in History: Selections from the Annales, Economies, Societes, Civilisations*, vol. 5 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 1979), vii.

<sup>88</sup> For instance, John Coveney suggests that biologically, food can be explained in cellular and physiological categories, while psychologically, what we eat is influenced by beliefs and values, and anthropologists alert us to the dual factors of materialist forces and symbolism that influence our food choices. John Coveney, *Food, Morals and Meaning: The Pleasure and Anxiety of Eating* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 2. Coveney, 18, also points to a number of studies that reveal the hegemony science has in modern discourse and perceptions about food. On this last point, see Michael Pollan, *In Defense of Food: an Eater’s Manifesto* (New York: Penguin Press, 2009).

anthropologist, Gillian Feeley-Harnik suggests, “we might be tempted to see food as the inevitably biological expression of our most primordial human condition”.<sup>90</sup> But for humans, food is not only served “raw”, but “cooked”,<sup>91</sup> and therefore, as ethicist Max Stackhouse has observed, cooking clearly separates humans from other creatures.<sup>92</sup> Humans uniquely shape, prepare, cook, and serve food with a diligence and attentiveness that identifies us as the “cooking animal”. Observing that the great apes eat very few plant species, anthropologists Don and Patricia Brothwell promulgated that the triumph of human evolution is in large part due to our experiment with eating widely and broadly regarding food.<sup>93</sup> Thus, Counihan and Van Esterik state that “Food is the foundation of every economy. It is a central pawn in political strategies of states and households. Food marks social difference, boundaries, bonds, and contradictions. Eating is an endlessly evolving enactment of gender, family, and community relationships...[F]ood is life.”<sup>94</sup>

When we turn to how food is shared among people through meals, another series of tangents is let loose. Beyond mere nourishment, food and meals are at one level extremely complex in the way they monitor social values, and in the way they can be festive and friendly events, or hostile ones.<sup>95</sup> Much can be learned about a culture in

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<sup>89</sup> Food is defined as that organic and material substance which is taken into the physical system to nourish and maintain life and growth. Don Brothwell and Patricia Brothwell, *Food in Antiquity: A Survey of the Diet of Early Peoples*, ed. Glyn Daniel (Norwich: Fletcher and Son, 1969), 13.

<sup>90</sup> Gillian Feeley-Harnik, “Religion and Food: An Anthropological Perspective,” *JAAR* 63, no. 3 (1995): 565.

<sup>91</sup> On this subject of raw and cooked, see the seminal work of anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Raw and the Cooked* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983). Published in 1969, *The Raw and the Cooked* studied the connection between cooking and the formation of culture. Cooking, according to Lévi-Strauss, is a language which is structured by the categories of raw, cooked and rotted. This triad is universal and influences the cultural and social conventions that determine how one eats, with whom, as well as what one eats. The essential point for the present study is simply to assert that meals convey layers of meaning and symbolism in a universal manner.

<sup>92</sup> Max L. Stackhouse, “Godly Cooking: Theological Ethics and Technological Society,” *First Things*, no. 13 (1991): 25.

<sup>93</sup> Brothwell and Brothwell, *Food in Antiquity*, 189.

<sup>94</sup> Carole Counihan and Penny Van Esterik, *Food and Culture: A Reader* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 1.

<sup>95</sup> Dietmar Neufeld, “Jesus’ Eating Transgressions and Social Impropriety in the Gospel of Mark: A Social Scientific Approach,” *BTB* 30, no. 1 (2000): 16.

answering questions of what people eat as well as when, where, and with whom, they eat.<sup>96</sup> Ethnologist, Mary Douglas, has stated,

If food is treated as a code, the messages it encodes will be found in the pattern of social relations being expressed. The message is about different degrees of hierarchy, inclusion and exclusion, boundaries and transactions across the boundaries. Like sex, the taking of food has a social component, as well as a biological one.<sup>97</sup>

This definition is important in broadening the practice of eating beyond solely biological and material categories. Cuisine is a “cultural text”.<sup>98</sup>

One recent study by anthropologist Merav Shohet, and linguistic anthropologist, Elinor Ochs, argued that meals in themselves are “cultural sites”, and that too often anthropologists have neglected to consider the way food socialises and facilitates change and formation between and across generations.<sup>99</sup> Thus they contend that global ethnographic studies repeatedly affirm that the social aspects of meals transcend the biological needs of eating. That is, while the structures and patterns of meals differ across cultures, the same socialising and forming processes are inherent.<sup>100</sup> What this suggests is that commensality<sup>101</sup> is a basis for civilisation and the formation and development of human beings both as individuals, and within community. The authors claim that food symbolism is universal “in the sense that

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<sup>96</sup> Nicole Duran’s discussion about biblical women who use food to kill, also highlights the way sharing food binds people together when she states “there is a sort of anthropological truism that the sharing of a meal constitutes a community. Those who eat together become one—physically, as their physical substance will be reconstituted by the one meal they share, and socially, through the shared experience of eating and drinking.” Nicole Duran, “Having Men for Dinner: Deadly Banquets and Biblical Women,” *BTB* 35, no. 4 (2005): 118.

<sup>97</sup> Mary Douglas, *Deciphering a Meal: Implicit Meanings* (New York: Routledge, 1975), 249.

<sup>98</sup> James L. Watson and Melissa L. Caldwell, eds., *The Cultural Politics of Food and Eating: A Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), 220.

<sup>99</sup> Elinor Ochs and Merav Shohet, “The Cultural Structuring of Mealtime Socialization,” *New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development*, no. 111 (2006): 35.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>101</sup> The authors state that “Commensality is the practice of sharing food and eating together in a social group such as a family. Universally, commensality is central to defining and sustaining the family as a social unit. In ancient Greece, for example, *oikos* (family) was stipulated as ‘those who feed together’”. *Ibid.*, 36. See also Michael Symons who notes that “The English word ‘commensality’ means sharing a table (Latin *mensa*), but also implies the formation of some sort of social unit. ‘Company’ and ‘companionship’ derive from sharing bread (*panis*) and bring a sense of ‘accompanying’.” Michael Symons, *The Pudding that Took a Thousand Cooks: A History and Philosophy of Cooking and Nurturing in Daily Life* (Ringwood: Viking, 1998), 177.

members imbue particular kinds and qualities of food with sentimental, moral, religious, and health-related meanings. Adults and children can also use food as a symbol of communal identity over historical time as well as to affirm or diminish affection and social bonds”<sup>102</sup>. It could very well follow, then, that the sharing of meals is a *universal* language, and although it may encode different and diverse data within and across societies, the argument that meals are universal cultural sites appears robust. That is, whenever meals are partaken anywhere and anytime, deeper and wider social, cultural, and formative elements are in play. Thus Ochs and Shohet conclude that as cultural sites, meals enable people “to learn, reinforce, undermine, or transform each other’s ways of acting, thinking, and feeling in the world”<sup>103</sup>. The concrete practice of eating together, though laden with multiple strands of meaning and symbolism, is in and of itself a pivotal and central act in the formation and development of human civilisation. As anthropologist, Maurice Bloch asserts, universally, “sharing food is a way of establishing closeness, while, conversely, the refusal to share is one of the clearest marks of distance and enmity...Commensality, the action of eating together, is thus one of the most powerful operators of the social process”<sup>104</sup>.

This is a key point in looking at the meals in Luke as pivotal in the nurture and success of the mission of Jesus, but more so the early church. There is nothing significantly unique either about the early Christians eating together, or of Jesus’ commensality with sinners.

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<sup>102</sup> Ochs and Shohet, “*Cultural Structuring*,” 39. Other studies have shown: benefits of eating family meals together on healthy adolescent development, Marla E. Eisenberg et al., “Correlations Between Family Meals and Psychosocial Well-being Among Adolescents,” *Arch Pediatr Adolesc Med* 158, no. 8 (2004). Eating alone is seen as a factor in the higher incidence of eating disorders in young women, Miguel Angel Martinez-Gonzalez et al., “Parental Factors, Mass Media Influences, and the Onset of Eating Disorders in a Prospective Population-Based Cohort,” *Pediatrics* 111, no. 2 (2003). Frequent family meal participants have lower incidence of disordered eating, Dianne Neumark-Sztainer et al., “Family Meals and Disordered Eating in Adolescents: Longitudinal Findings From Project EAT,” *Arch Pediatr Adolesc Med* 162, no. 1 (2008). Eating meals with others is associated with increased health outcomes for the elderly (aged 65+), Carolyn T. Martin et al., “Factors Contributing to Low Weight in Community-Living Older Adults,” *Journal of the American Academy of Nurse Practitioners* 17, no. 10 (2005). The significance of shared meals in the spirituality of African Americans and the formation and cohesion of community in their churches, Jualynne E. Dodson and Cheryl Townsend Gilkes, ““There’s Nothing like Church Food”: Food and the U.S. Afro-Christian Tradition: Re-Membering Community and Feeding the Embodied S/spirit(s),” *JAAR* 63, no. 3 (1995).

<sup>103</sup> Ochs and Shohet, “*Cultural Structuring*,” 47.

<sup>104</sup> Maurice Bloch, “Commensality and Poisoning,” *Social Research* 66, no. 1 (1999).

However, it is the locus of the meal that enables the movement to gain momentum and grow. We shall see in Chapter 2 that there are important theological issues surrounding Jesus at table, but here we note that the role of meals as formulating social bonds and deepening relationships is a universal one, not unique to the early church.

We may now ask, if food and eating are unarguably central to life, and if meals are significant factors in the formation of culture and civilisation, why have cooks been snubbed?

## 1.2. The Snubbing of Cooks

Michael Symons in his stand alone tome *The Pudding That Took a Thousand Cooks*, traces Western intellectual history's ignoring of cooks back to Plato who "decried cooks", declaring that cookery "isn't an art at all". Symons asserts that

Plato's warning against cooks—as mere seducers of the palate, with this-worldly preoccupations and apathetic to theoretical principles—accompanies his philosophical dualism. Entranced by an eternal world of 'forms', of which our world is an inferior copy, he decided that the mind is linked to the higher things, such as logic, eternal values and spiritual truth, whereas food, its cooking and enjoyment are naturally part of the lower, physical and transient world.<sup>105</sup>

This Platonic aversion to food and desire was present in early Christian writings, such as Clement of Alexandria who wrote, "Fasting empties the soul of matter and makes it, with the body, clear and light for the reception of divine truth".<sup>106</sup> Patristic writers considered gluttony to be the first sin and often associated desire for food and the pleasures of taste with sexual lust.<sup>107</sup> Such notions seem a world away when we consider Jesus being called a "drunkard and glutton" in Luke's Gospel. Robert Karris notes the prevalence of food

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<sup>105</sup> Symons, *The Pudding*, 37.

<sup>106</sup> Bynum, *Holy Feast*, 36.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, 36-37.

imagery in Luke but laments that contemporary commentaries fail to take into account the “realia” of food and drink.<sup>108</sup> Perhaps this is in part due to the historical snubbing of cooks.

Turning again to the theme of cooks and food, Symons notes the historical snubbing of what cooks do, coupled with the suspicion and contempt in which their profession has been regarded, still pervades relatively recent scholarship. Roland Barthes, writing in 1979, claimed something similar: “We do not see our own food, or worse, we assume that it is insignificant. Even—or perhaps especially—to the scholar, the subject of food connotes triviality or guilt.”<sup>109</sup> The “demonization” of cooks is in part due to their being “complicit in the sin of conspicuous consumption, through which the rich demonstrate their wealth and assert their power by way of flamboyant, or even engagingly refined, feasts”.<sup>110</sup> Symons posits that cooking and food is actually the centrepiece of human civilisation: food *is* life. As Symons insightfully asserts, “In a metabolic universe, eating *is* living...For humans, cooking is the only alternative to death. Cooks are in charge. Civilisation is a culinary act”.<sup>111</sup> Moreover, citing the research of prehistorian, Catherine Perlès, Symons notes that the human species is unique for heating food and combining ingredients and that in addition to cooking making humans unique creatures, it is the culinary act that forms our very humanity.<sup>112</sup> Therefore, because eating and food are central and foundational to human existence, it is not unreasonable to claim that they will be, or should be, present in the practice of hospitality.

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<sup>108</sup> Karris, *Eating*, 3.

<sup>109</sup> Roland Barthes, “Toward a Psychosociology of Contemporary Food Consumption,” in *Food and Drink in History: Selections from the Annales, Economies, Societies, Civilisations*, ed. Robert Forster and Orest Ranum (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979), 167. See also James Watson and Melissa Caldwell who also note the historical dearth of scholarship pertaining to food studies. Watson and Caldwell, eds., *The Cultural Politics*, 1. See also Martha Finch’s observation that this dearth of scholarship on food is also apparent in general food studies with regard to religion. She notes in particular that hardly any studies on food and religion have been published in the last decade in major American food and culture journals. Martha L. Finch, “Food, Taste, and American Religions,” *Religion Compass* 4, no. 1 (2010): 41-42.

<sup>110</sup> Symons, *The Pudding*, 101.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, 190.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, 213.

Hellenistic Jewish writers, like Philo, also shared these concerns about cooks and “flamboyant feasts”, but we shall see shortly that the Hebrew Bible also portrays nuances of gift and joy regarding food and meals, flowing from the notion of Yahweh as creation’s host.

### 1.3. Philo and Cooks

Moving the analysis of the snubbing of cooks to Philo of Alexandria,<sup>113</sup> a contemporary of Jesus, the representative Hellenistic Jewish author often counsels against the evils of food and desire. He allegorically compares the description of washing the inner parts of a goat for a burnt offering (cf. Lev 9:14) to the path of perfection: “he is content if he can purify his bowels, that is to say, his inmost parts from it, which the lovers of pleasure say are certain additions to preceding pleasures, and which originate in the superfluous ingenuity of cooks and makers of delicacies and laborious gourmands” (*Allegorical Interpretation III XLVIII*).<sup>114</sup> In a commentary on Genesis 3:16, Philo proposes that the outward senses are either governed by God’s law or by destruction. Thus, he counsels, “See the glutton, what a slave he is to all the preparations which cooks and confectioners devise” (*Aleg. Int. III. LXXVIII*).<sup>115</sup>

Contrasting the virtue of poets and historians with those who practice “lower” arts, Philo stated that “the cooks and confectioners of our time, and those persons who are only artists of superfluous luxury...are always building up the outward senses with some new colour, or shape, or scent, or flavour, so as utterly to destroy the most important part of us, the mind” (*Concerning Noah’s Work as a Planter XXXVIII*).<sup>116</sup> Philo counsels that true freedom is in “service of the only wise God”, and that it is “a peculiar property of those who serve the

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<sup>113</sup> For a biographical introduction to Philo, see Wayne A. Meeks, *The Moral World of the First Christians* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1986), 81-85.

<sup>114</sup> Charles D. Yonge, *The Works of Philo: Complete and Unabridged* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1996), 66.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 75-76.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, 204.



living God neither to regard the work of cup-bearers, or bakers, or cooks” (*On the Confusion of Tongues*. XX).<sup>117</sup> And he believes that truth is only found in God and that “all those imaginings, which exist in the unsteady, puffed up, and arrogant life of those men who are not yet purified, but who delight in those pleasures which proceed from bakers, and cooks, and wine-bearers, are uncertain and indistinct” (*On The Migration of Abraham*, IV).<sup>118</sup>

For Philo, how one handles food is directly related to one’s intellect:

For, to a lover of wisdom, a loaf is sufficient nourishment, keeping the bodies free from disease, and the intellect sound, and healthy, and sober. But high seasonings, and cheesecakes, and sweetmeats, and all the other delicacies which the superfluous skill of confectioners and cooks concoct to cajole the illiterate, and unphilosophical...constantly engenders incurable diseases both in the body and the mind (*The Special Laws I*. XXXV).<sup>119</sup>

And finally, Philo warns that the wicked are “led captive by strong wine, and by beauty, and by delicate eating, and sweetmeats, and by the arts of cooks and confectioners (*Every Good Man is Free*. IVV).<sup>120</sup>

Philo, a Hellenistic Jew, echoes some of the warning of Plato about the dangers of cooks, and by doing so moves away from the Hebrew Bible’s emphasis on food as the good gift of Yahweh. More will be said on this shortly, but for now we could propose that it is not cooks who are thus guilty of being mere “seducers of the palate”, but God who, according to the Hebrew Bible, provides the ingredients in the first place. But in order to provide a more theologically robust appreciation of food, we should raise the question of how food and theology are related, if at all. Is there a need for a “theology of food”?

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<sup>117</sup> Ibid., 242.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., 254–55.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., 550.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid., 684–85.

#### 1.4. Theology as Food

We have proposed that hospitality is most universally and practically expressed through the sharing of food, however, we need to go one step further to propose that food can, in and of itself, be theology. That is, we will consider theology as food and food as theology. To this end, a recent and ground-breaking work, *The Theology of Food: Eating and the Eucharist* by Angel F. Méndez Montoya, provides the missing ingredient.

Montoya too laments the dearth of theological scholarship on food and proposes that “Because food matters, theology’s vocation is to become alimentation [that is, nourishment]: a theology not only concerned *about* food matters, but also a theology envisioned *as* food.”<sup>121</sup> Montoya calls this *alimentary theology* which he posits “can deepen our awareness of matters regarding food, while reorienting the dimension of interdependence between human communities, humanity with ecology, and all creation to God.”<sup>122</sup> Montoya puts eloquently some of the things I am seeking to develop in this thesis with his recently published book. His thesis is a nascent and creative approach to the theological enterprise and he hopes to persuade that “one of the main tasks facing contemporary theological discourse is to be that which it eats...to be nourished by divine caritas in the making of theology – a “culinary art” – and thus become a form of alimentation to others.”<sup>123</sup>

Montoya proposes that alimentary theology “not only pays closer attention to matters related to food and nourishment...it is an envisioning of theology *as* nourishment: food as theology and theology as food.”<sup>124</sup> Montoya maintains that alimentary theology can engender a deeper appreciation for the multiple layers present in theologising by paying

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<sup>121</sup> Angel F. Mendez Montoya, *Theology of Food: Eating and the Eucharist* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 3. See also Shannon Jung who says that “Food doesn’t seem to be on the table for theological discussion”. Shannon L. Jung, *Food for Life: The Spirituality and Ethics of Eating* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004), 36-37.

<sup>122</sup> Mendez Montoya, *Theology of Food*, 3.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

closer attention to food and nourishment. Alimentary theology is “food for thought; it addresses some of the spiritual and physical hungers of the world, and seeks ways of bringing about nourishment.”<sup>125</sup> This is not to say that this methodological approach by Montoya is disembodied and metaphorical in nature, but rather that it seeks to allow our physical and somatic experiences to become central in reflecting theologically.<sup>126</sup> For Montoya, theology that does not feed and nourish the physical and spiritual hungers of humanity is not theology at all.<sup>127</sup> Due to the dearth of theological resources concerning food, Montoya turns to more popular works such as the novels of Laura Esquivel’s *Like Water for Chocolate*, and Isak Dinesen’s *Babette’s Feast*. Those familiar with these texts and their subsequent film adaptations will be aware of the central role food plays in communication, community, and ultimately, love. Thus for Montoya, “food is not ‘just food,’ but an expression of multiple connections within our bodies, the earth, local and global economies, and finally, God. Food is also a construction of people’s identities: national, political, economic, social, cultural, religious, somatic, sexual, and so on.”<sup>128</sup> Montoya consistently reiterates that food matters and that “this should not be as marginal as it presently is to theological thought. From a theological perspective, and from the Creation narrative, food is a central theme of God’s superabundant self-sharing.”<sup>129</sup> In this sense, theology is akin to cuisine, and perhaps the metaphor of cuisine, and the concrete practice of food is an apt and highly appropriate way of defining theology.<sup>130</sup>

What does Montoya’s thesis mean for this present study? Firstly, it accentuates and heightens the importance of food, and thus hospitality, as not peripheral in theologising, but primary. That is, in claiming that food and hospitality are the locus of mission and ministry

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<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid., 33.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid., 42.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., 112.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid., 158-59.

in Luke's Gospel, it is not just that these things happen as a result of hospitality, but they happen *because* of hospitality. More succinctly, they are perhaps best experienced and known *through* hospitality. Secondly, a re-evaluation of the importance of food can lift the "mundane" tasks of food cultivation, preparation, and service to a more sacramental level. Finally, alimentary theology asks that the theological process and enterprise be nourishing and "food" for people's lives. This is a critique of theology as an end in itself or an enterprise that offers no "nutrition" to communities of faith. And this is why I conclude the thesis with a theological reflection on the findings of the analysis of Lukan meal scenes, for I desire to provide something useful and "nutritious" for the communities I serve and lead. Furthermore, the contemporary social obsession with food and eating presents a theological opportunity. As Shannon Jung believes, the "present offers a moment when Christians and others might be open to the religious significance of food and eating".<sup>131</sup>

## **1.5. Conclusions**

The argument that cooking has been side-lined in history and the importance of the cook has not been afforded the deference she deserves has been established. Secondly we considered that meals are elaborate and universal communication systems of socialisation, formation, and civilisation. This led to the proposal that food and meals are in fact in and of themselves hospitality. As a foretaste of further examination of Jewish notions of food and hospitality, Philo of Alexandria was shown to also perpetuate the suspicion of cooks. Finally we raised the possibility of food being more central to the theological process, even to the point of considering theology as food. Now that the importance that cooking and eating meals plays in human civilisation has been established, we will move the analysis of food and meals to the Hebrew Bible and cultural world of the NT.

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<sup>131</sup> Jung, *Food for Life*, 37.

## 2. Hebrew Bible, Near East, and Greco-Roman Banquet Tradition

Food and hospitality in the Hebrew Bible<sup>132</sup> provide an important historical, religious and cultural backdrop for the Gospel of Luke, and if we are to properly understand hospitality within Luke we need to consider this backdrop. We will trace a general line through the Hebrew Bible and wider Near Eastern and Greco-Roman practices, including the banquet tradition of the *symposia*, and finish by looking at Jewish practices in the intertestamental period.

### 2.1. Hebrew Bible and Ancient Near East

In the ancient Near East, and consequently for the Israelites, eating was rarely done alone and hospitality provided the foundation for food sharing. Survival was implicit in ancient practices of hospitality, as nomadic lifestyles, harsh climates, food production tied completely to weather patterns, thieves, and warring tribes and kingdoms made life very tenuous. Caring for the need of strangers was a type of investment into one's own future should conditions become unstable and dangerous. Ancient Mediterranean invitations of hospitality if refused could shame the host, were mostly initiated by the male household head, and guests remained under the host's protection until they departed.<sup>133</sup> Modern notions of democracy, individualism, equality, middle class, or capitalism were absent from this largely agrarian society where subsistence was the norm. Survival was predicated upon being cautious of outsiders, regularly sharing meals with members of one's household and family, and by reciprocity and sharing within one's group.<sup>134</sup> The reverence ancient Greek

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<sup>132</sup> In what follows it is not my intention to comment on historicity, authorship and composition of texts, but only to provide a brief thematic overview concerning some key facets of food and meals in the Hebrew Bible. While it is argued later that Luke is primarily influenced by the Septuagint, and notwithstanding the lexical differences in the two, references to the Hebrew Bible are general and take in the Jewish Scriptures as a whole.

<sup>133</sup> Hobbs, "*Teleological Fallacy*," 9-10. See also Victor Matthews who has noted that this ancient Near Eastern hospitality "followed a set pattern of ritual fulfilment of obligation and expectation. The concept of hosting originated in the need for aid when away from home." Victor Matthews, "Hospitality and Hostility in Judges 4," *BTB*, no. 21-22 (1991): 13.

<sup>134</sup> Finger, *Of Widows*, 277.

and Near-Eastern people had regarding the sacred bonds between guest and host was a central moral foundation that was not to be violated without retribution following.<sup>135</sup>

In the Hebrew Bible, food and hospitality appear extensively. In Leviticus and Deuteronomy, for example, food and eating are referred to over 250 and 150 times respectively, while in Genesis 1-3, around 30 times. Feeley-Harnik notes that food has a long history within Israel as a medium of understanding both interpersonal relationships and relationship to God. Covenantal faithfulness or unfaithfulness included one's eating habits to the point that one committed apostasy when violating food laws.<sup>136</sup>

### **2.1.1. Yahweh: Creation's Provedore**

Turning to Genesis, it is God who gives the humans "seed-bearing plant...and every tree that has fruit with seed in it" as food (1:29), while the beasts, birds, creatures, and "everything that has the breath of life in it", are given every green plant for food (1:30). However, along with the first command of God in the Hebrew Bible concerning the freedom for humans to eat (2:16), was a prohibition on eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (2:17). The story does not need retelling here, but the consequences of the disobedience are a series of divine judgements that decree food gathering and eating will have far less enjoyment for the creatures. The ground is cursed, eating will be preceded by painful toil (3:17), the earth will produce thorns and thistles (3:18), and the humans will eat food "by the sweat of your brow" (3:19). Later in Genesis the Edenic vegetarian menu is increased: "[e]verything that lives and moves will be food for you" (9:3), however, a prohibition is added: "you must not eat meat that has its lifeblood still in it" (9:4).<sup>137</sup> What we see here in the creation narrative is the foundation for the significance of dietary laws and eating habits for Israel's identity and their understanding of Yahweh. But more

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<sup>135</sup> Koenig, *New Testament Hospitality*, 2.

<sup>136</sup> Feeley-Harnik, *Lord's Table*, 19.

<sup>137</sup> See also Lev 3:17, 7:26-27, 17:10-14, 19:26; Deut 12:16-24, 15:23; 1 Sam 14:33-34.

explicitly they point to the most significant image: Yahweh as “providore”, or, “creation’s host”.

Yahweh as creation’s host is elaborated in Psalm 78, where the Exodus history of Israel is retold through the repeated juxtaposing of God’s love and fidelity, contrasted with Israel’s sin and apostasy. In one telling stanza, the Israelites are accused of putting God to the test whilst in the desert by questioning and doubting God’s ability to feed them: “Can God spread a table in the desert?” (78:19). Even though they had seen God’s provision of water in the desert, they still asked, “can he also give us food? Can he supply meat for his people?” (78:20b). In response, Yahweh is provoked to anger and wrath (v. 21) and rains down manna, also called the “grain of heaven” and the “bread of angels”, and sends the people “all the food they could eat” (vv. 23-25). If this response were not enough to convince the people that Yahweh could indeed feed them, meat also rained down in excessive abundance (vv. 27-28), and the people “ate till they had more than enough, for he had given them what they craved” (v. 29). Taking the text at face-value, it presents the scenario in which Yahweh is greatly offended and angered at the Israelites’ doubting his ability and power to provide food for them. This defensiveness of Yahweh concerning the provision of food is also depicted in the polemic of Yahweh’s response to Job’s questions. Yahweh adjures Job “Do you hunt the prey for the lioness and satisfy the hunger of the lions?” Yahweh then asks “Who provides food for the raven when its young cry out to God and wander about for lack of food?” (Job 38:39–41). James Grimshaw extends the image of God as host by stating that “the primary manner in which God feeds God’s creation is through creation. God feeds out of the natural world, from “nature’s storehouse.” God brings forth food out of the earth so all creatures can eat”.<sup>138</sup> Grimshaw sees symbolism in the earth as being akin to God’s body which provides food and sustenance to earth’s

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<sup>138</sup> James P. Grimshaw, *The Matthean Community and the World: An Analysis of Matthew’s Food Exchange*, vol. 111, SBL (New York: Peter Lang, 2008), 57.

creatures. This becomes a maternal image for God who, like a mother with a child, feeds the hungry creation from God's own body the earth.<sup>139</sup>

The consistent testimony of Yahweh as creation's host is enunciated further in Psalm 104, which embodies Israel's creation faith<sup>140</sup> and depicts Yahweh as sovereign provider and sustainer of the earth and its creatures:

He makes grass grow for the cattle, and plants for man to cultivate—  
bringing forth food from the earth:  
wine that gladdens the heart of man,  
oil to make his face shine,  
and bread that sustains his heart (104:14-15).

Even fierce predators such as lions “seek their food from God” (v. 21), and the panoply of creation is sustained and provided for by Yahweh:

These all look to you  
to give them their food at the proper time.  
When you give it to them,  
they gather it up;  
when you open your hand,  
they are satisfied with good things (vv. 27-28).

Walter Brueggemann notes that Psalm 104 presents God as creation's “secure governor” who formed creation as “a great food chain”, and the knowledge of such extravagant provision elicits a doxological response from humans.<sup>141</sup> This provision of food from God is also a clear indication of the blessing and power of Yahweh.<sup>142</sup> Such provision by Yahweh in the Hebrew Bible is not envisioned as making people passive or lazy; on the contrary, people are partners with Yahweh's provision of food through their labour and hard work (Prov 12:11; 20:13; 21:20; 28:19). But it is trust in the ability and power of Yahweh alone to provide food that gives security and life.

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<sup>139</sup> Ibid., 58.

<sup>140</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997), 155.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid., 156.

<sup>142</sup> Cf. Deut 11:15; Ru 1:6; Job 36:31, 38:4; Ps 23:5; 63:6; 65:5, 9; 103:5; 111:5; 127:2; 132:15; 136:25; 145:15; 147:9; Isa 43:20.



This theme of Yahweh as host is foundational for the Israelites. John Navone notes that images of abundance and banquets are intrinsically connected to the host image: “God is clearly the host who provides food for all life. Beyond this comprehensive care for all creation, God issues an invitation to enjoy the benefits of redemption that are often poetically depicted in terms of abundant food or a banquet”.<sup>143</sup> Thus when God appears to Jacob at Bethel (Gen 28:10-22), Jacob makes a vow with the condition of God providing food to eat (28:20). When the Israelites grumble against Moses and Aaron due to their increasing hunger (Ex 16:3), they express longing to return to slavery with its regular supply of food. But on what grounds will the people’s faith and trust in the power and sovereignty of Yahweh be based? Moses tells the grumbling hungry people that “You will know that it was the LORD when he gives you meat to eat in the evening and all the bread you want in the morning (Ex 16:8), and after they eat from the hand of Yahweh they “will know that I am the LORD your God” (Ex 16:12). Indeed, covenantal faithfulness to Yahweh comes with a specific blessing concerning food: “Worship the LORD your God, and his blessing will be on your food and water” (Ex 23:25). Alternatively, the lack of food can also signify God’s judgement on the nation (cf. Deut 28:48; Isa 3:1; Jer 5:17, 9:15, 52:6; Ezek 4:16-17, 14:13; Joel 1:16). Thus the very nature and character of Israel’s God is consistently linked with Yahweh’s ability and power to provide food, or to withhold it. This providence of Yahweh as host is displayed in the life of the prophet Elijah, when in a time of a divinely ordered drought, Yahweh assures Elijah that he will provide food through ravens (1 Kings 17:4), and a starving widow (1 Kings 17:9). And when Elijah is exhausted and depressed after his momentous victory over the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel (1 Kings 18:16-46), an angel visits and twice commands him to eat and drink the divinely provided cake of bread and jar of water (1 Kings 19:1-9).

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<sup>143</sup> John Navone, “Divine and Human Hospitality,” *New Black Friars* 85, no. 997 (2004): 335.

### 2.1.2. Significant Food and Hospitality Motifs

In the Hebrew Bible, significant and pivotal events in Israel's history happen in the midst of hospitality and meals, such as Genesis 18, where Abraham is visited by "the LORD" when three men appeared at his tent. In response, Abraham pleads to be allowed the honour of washing their feet, providing them a place of rest, and preparing a lavish meal for them (18:1-8).<sup>144</sup> His hospitality is lavish and generous even within the accepted norms of the day. When two of the visitors, now identified as angels, move on to Sodom, the same obsequious entreaty to be bestowed the honour of providing hospitality is expressed by Abraham's nephew, Lot (19:1-2; cf. 2 Kings 4:8-10).<sup>145</sup> Sodom is ultimately destroyed due to its violation of the ancient customs and laws of hospitality (Gen 19:1-29),<sup>146</sup> as were the Benjamites of the town of Gibeah for a similar violation (Jud 19:11-30). In another significant food incident, Esau, the firstborn son of Isaac traded away his birth right for a meal that his brother had cooked (Gen 26:29-43). The dying patriarch Isaac, who was noted as having "a taste for wild game" (25:28),<sup>147</sup> asks Esau to prepare some "tasty food" (27:4) before he gives his final blessing. But Jacob and his mother conspire to present their meal first, thus deceiving Isaac into giving his blessing to the younger Jacob (27:5-30).

Consistent in the Hebrew Bible is the incidence of food being central as a language in depicting interpersonal and divine-human relationships.<sup>148</sup> For instance, meals were a means of establishing and ratifying covenants between parties (Gen 26:26-31; 31:44-54). And a

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<sup>144</sup> The *Testament of Abraham* (A), dated around the Maccabean period, describes Abraham as very hospitable and righteous for "he pitched his tent at the crossroads of the oak of Mamre and welcomed everyone—rich and poor, kings and rulers, the crippled and the helpless, friends and strangers, neighbors and passersby—all on equal terms did the pious, entirely holy, righteous, and hospitable Abraham welcome" (1:1-2). James H. Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol. 1 (London: Yale University Press, 1983), 778.

<sup>145</sup> Wenham notes that "True to the cardinal principle of oriental hospitality that protecting your guests is a sacred duty, he bravely goes out to face the mob alone." Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, vol. 2, WBC (Dallas: Word, 2002), 55. Josephus says of Lot "And the angels came to the city of the Sodomites, and Lot entreated them to accept of a lodging with him; for he was a very generous and hospitable man, and one that had learned to imitate the goodness of Abraham" (*Ant* 1.11.3).

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

<sup>147</sup> Wenham aptly describes Isaac as "a gourmand who loves his food". *Ibid.*, 177.

<sup>148</sup> Feeley-Harnik, *Lord's Table*, 19.

female Israelite sold as a servant, who married her master's son, must not be deprived of food if he takes another wife. If she is not provided with food, then under the Law she is free to go without payment being required to release her (Ex 21:7–11). Moreover, an Israelite who falls on hard times can expect the type of support extended to an alien or a temporary resident, that is, food must not be sold to him/her with the intent of profiting (Lev 25:35–38). And more generally Israelites were prohibited by divine injunction on charging interest on food (Deut 23:19). These are not incidental injunctions, but rather they come from the self-revelation of the character of Yahweh to the Israelites. Thus in Deuteronomy, grand and lofty statements about Yahweh such as “To the LORD your God belong the heavens, even the highest heavens, the earth and everything in it”, and “the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of Lords, the great God, mighty and awesome”, are quickly followed by the concrete description of Yahweh as the one who gives food and clothing to widows, aliens, and the fatherless (Deut 10:14–18). Even though food could also be emblematic of wealth and power (1 Kings 10:4–5), providing food for the poor is one of the characteristics of Yahweh (cf. Ps 132:15; 146:7), and therefore, the people of Israel who are righteous will do the same (cf. Isa 58:7; Ezek 18:7, 16).

Another important aspect of food in the Hebrew Bible is that of unclean food. This was a pivotal indicator of identity for the people of Israel, as defiled food is a constant threat to their purity (cf. Lev 11; Deut 14; Isa 65:4; Ezek 4:13; 18:6; Hos 9:3; Mal 1:7; 12). In the book of Daniel, the issue of food purity arises when Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon orders that the best and brightest of Israelite nobility are to serve in his court (1:1-4). Among those chosen were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, who were given portions of food and wine from the king's table (v. 5). However, Daniel resisted the royal food viewing it as defiled (v. 8), and he and his companions were given permission to eat only vegetables and drink only water. The result was that they “looked healthier and better nourished than any of

the young men who ate the royal food” (v. 15). Daniel’s star continues to rise and this is in large part due to his covenantal faithfulness in his choice of food (cf. Jud 13:1-25).

The book of Ecclesiastes provides an overarching perspective on food and eating for Israel that depicts nuances of gift and joy. In 2:24-25, the Teacher (*qoheleth*) declares that a “man can do nothing better than to eat and drink and find satisfaction in his work. This too, I see, is from the hand of God, for without him, who can eat or find enjoyment?”. For eating, drinking and satisfying labour are a gift from God (3:13), and they are good and proper ways to enjoy life (5:18). For “nothing is better for a man under the sun than to eat and drink and be glad” (8:15), therefore “eat your food with gladness, and drink your wine with a joyful heart, for it is now that God favours what you do” (9:7). Thus, the refusal to eat food is an aberration in the life of Israel and is a sign of repentance, mourning or a commitment to some greater cause (1 Sam 1:7, 14:24-24; 2 Sam 12:17; Ezek 10:6; Ps 102:4-8; Dan 10:3). Eating and celebration are woven into Israel’s liturgical calendar by way of a number of perpetual commemorative feasts such as Unleavened Bread (Ex 12:15-20), Firstfruits (Lev 23:9-14), Weeks or Pentecost (Lev 23:15-21) and Tabernacles (Lev 23:33-36).<sup>149</sup> Moreover, eschatological imagery is often presented as an abundance of food and wine (cf. Amos 9:13-14; Hos 2:21-22; Joel 3:18), and is most vividly expressed in the banquet hosted by Yahweh:

On this mountain the Lord Almighty will prepare  
a feast of rich food for all peoples,  
a banquet of aged wine—  
the best of meats and the finest of wines (Isa 25:6).

While meals can be a source of joy, hospitality and welcome, they can also be a locus of seduction and deception. For instance, Jael lures Sisera, the fugitive army commander of the

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<sup>149</sup> See also Dietmar Neufeld who states that feasting in the Hebrew Bible affords conversation an opportunity and “has the positive transforming power of improving conviviality, renewing and reinforcing loyalty to “the institutions of laws,” and involving people in matrices of reciprocity and mutuality.” Neufeld, “*Jesus’ Eating*,” 17.

Canaanite king Jabin into her tent with the offer of hospitality, but instead kills him as he sleeps (Jud 4:17-22). In 2 Sam 13:1-14, King David's son, Amon, entraps his sister Tamar into preparing food for him and then rapes her. Moreover, David himself uses a meal to manipulate and deceive Uriah, the husband of Bathsheba in a plot to cover his own sin (2 Sam 11:13). Along these lines, food imagery is sometimes employed in morally negative images, such as the young man being warned that a "prostitute reduces you to a loaf of bread" (Prov 6:26), and "The words of a gossip are like choice morsels" (Prov 26:22). And although the Hebrew Bible does not display the Hellenistic caution about food that Plato and Philo exhibit, Israelites are nonetheless warned about the potential dangers of lavish feasting:

Better a dry crust with peace and quiet  
than a house full of feasting, with strife (Prov 17:1).

When you sit to dine with a ruler,  
note well what is before you,  
and put a knife to your throat  
if you are given to gluttony.  
Do not crave his delicacies,  
for that food is deceptive (Prov 23:1-3).

Do not join those who drink too much wine  
or gorge themselves on meat,  
for drunkards and gluttons become poor,  
and drowsiness clothes them in rags (Prov 23:20-21).

Undoubtedly, the most significant meal event for the Israelites was the Passover meal (Ex 12:1-30). Yahweh is depicted as being concerned with the precise details of the selection of the lamb, the time of its slaughter, the method of cooking—which must be roasting with bitter herbs—and instructs that no part of the animal is to be left by morning (12:3-11). Furthermore, this commemorative meal is to be a lasting ordinance (12:14, 24) as a means of remembering their deliverance from Egypt, but with certain prohibitions. As we have seen in the Garden and with Noah, the divine commands and instructions on eating tend to come with prohibitions. In the case of the Passover, foreigners, temporary residents and

hired workers cannot partake, while slaves and aliens willing to be circumcised can eat the meal (12:43-51).

Within these overarching notions and practices of hospitality, the Hebrew Bible portrays a nuanced exclusivity about whom one may eat with and show hospitality to. Israelite meal practices draw specific boundaries that revealed either covenantal faithfulness or apostasy. This is best described as a conditional inclusiveness among Jews and those who were favourable to them; however, the rebellious wicked and foreign enemies are utterly excluded.<sup>150</sup>

What is important for our present study is the extent to which meals are polyvalent in what they transmit. That is, significant and diverse interactions and events transpire within hospitality expressed through meals. Secondly, the Hebrew Bible presents food and hospitality in serious and weighty terms in the way they can indicate either covenantal faithfulness or apostasy. But perhaps what I see as most important is the image of God as creation's host, for this image transcends cultural or covenantal specific images. This means that the Creator God is host for *all* peoples through the provision of sustenance to creation. This is important when it comes to meals as a form of mission because it places all cultures and peoples on an equal footing regardless of race or religion. While issues of selection and covenant pervade the Hebrew Bible, God as creation's host extends to all peoples. And while in Luke Jesus is presented as Lord, Messiah, and Son of God, the backdrop of God as host nuances claims of exclusivity in mission. Meals for Christians are nuanced Christologically, to be sure; however, the theological concept of God as creation's host can mean that any meal, anywhere, between any parties may be a source of divine-encounter.

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<sup>150</sup> Blomberg, *Contagious Holiness*, 63.

With this general view of the pervasiveness of hospitality as a practice in ancient Near East, and with the more tightly conceived practice within the Hebrew Bible, we will move on to examine Greco-Roman notions of hospitality and banquet traditions.

## **2.2. The Greco-Roman Banquet Tradition and Jewish Intertestamental Texts**

Hospitality in ancient Greece was understood as a type of virtue or quality that transcended a definition of how persons or gods related to one another, and how one treated strangers was a direct measure of one's civility or impiety.<sup>151</sup> An important distinction between the ancient Greek and Roman contexts was that hospitality as a patron-client relationship for the ancient Greeks included exchange between entities of unequal standing, whereas Greco-Roman hospitality transpired mostly between equals<sup>152</sup> and emphasized reciprocity.<sup>153</sup> This latter understanding is perhaps seen most clearly in the Greco-Roman banquet tradition. In what follows we will juxtapose the Greco-Roman banquet tradition with Jewish intertestamental practice of hospitality, with a special emphasis on the symposia examining what extent, if any, it was incorporated into Jewish and early church commensality. Since a number of scholars have argued that the Greco-Roman banquet tradition has influenced the way Luke portrays Jesus at table,<sup>154</sup> we will assess whether such arguments are justified by examining Jewish practices of dining in the intertestamental period.

The banquet in Greco-Roman society carried much weight regarding importance as well as layers of social, cultural, and religious meanings.<sup>155</sup> Who was, and was not invited, as well

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<sup>151</sup> Artebury, *Entertaining Angels*, 37. Artebury, 38, believes that the ancient Greek customs and practices of hospitality as described above, heavily influence the Mediterranean culture in which Luke penned his writings. He adds, "In general, the custom of private hospitality in a Greco-Roman context changed very little from the time period of archaic Greek civilizations to that of early Roman Empire."

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

<sup>153</sup> Bretherton, *Hospitality as Holiness*, 134. On the social stratification of Roman society, see Meeks, *The Moral World*, 32-38.

<sup>154</sup> The symposia thesis was first proposed by X. de Meeus, "Composition de Lc 14 et genre symposiaque," *ETL* 37 (1961). For an overview of the history of this thesis see Willi Braun, *Feasting and Social Rhetoric in Luke 14* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 137 n.13.

<sup>155</sup> See Smith and Taussig's elaboration of patterns they believe belong to the ancient banquet ideology, such as social bonding, social obligation, social stratification, social equality. Dennis E. Smith and

as acceptance or refusal of invitations, joined with the pressure of the event itself, all added to the tension. The banquet consisted of the dinner (δεῖπνον) and a later conversational drinking party called the symposia.<sup>156</sup> The two courses of the dinner consisted of a first course involving meat and vegetables, and the second course included sweets, fruit, and bread. Depending on the status of the host, entertainment consisted of things ranging from educated conversation, musical instruments, dancing, through to courtesans and prostitutes. Seating allocation was based around rank and status with the highest honour being afforded to the guest of honour who sat next to the host, while those of lower rank may have found themselves in a separate room from the main party. Dinner guests were friends and/or relatives of the host and were by and large a homogenous group.<sup>157</sup> Food allocation was not equal portions and quality, and better portions went to the more important guests and so on down the line. After the banquet the expectation of reciprocity ensured that the host would be invited as guest to other banquets held by his guests.<sup>158</sup> The religious dimension in Greco-Roman banquets was always present with gods invoked and obeisance to household spirits.<sup>159</sup> At the symposia, wine and water were mixed and libations to gods were offered as well as the singing of religious songs, and festivity undergirded the religious aspects. These meal events were celebratory and joyous in nature.<sup>160</sup>

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Hal E. Taussig, *Many Tables: The Eucharist in the New Testament and Liturgy Today* (London: SCM, 1990), 31-33.

<sup>156</sup> Blomberg adds more detail noting that the banquet itself was referred to as a *symposia* which consisted of a “two-part banquet that began with an elaborate meal, followed by a ‘drinking party’ with various forms of entertainment (e.g. music, dancing, or sex) and including discussions of themes ranging from the serious to the banal.” Blomberg, *Contagious Holiness*, 86.

<sup>157</sup> Blomberg comments that “Special banqueting halls or large rooms were reserved for the symposia, and the practice of reclining on cushions that were placed next to a square-shaped U arrangement of tables (the *triclinium*) developed as a sign of the leisure and luxury of the meal. This arrangement also allowed guests to be seated according to rank, with each place designating a certain degree of honour.” *Ibid.*, 87.

<sup>158</sup> Finger, *Of Widows*, 172-73.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*, 174.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*, 175.



The similarities between the Greco-Roman symposia and both Jewish and Christian dining practices have been well noted by scholars.<sup>161</sup> Smith and Taussig, for instance, suggest that it is probable that the historical Jesus “not only attended banquets, often presumably as simply another guest, but also, in a style consistent with the symposium tradition, taught at them as well”,<sup>162</sup> and “the Greco-Roman banquet provided both the form and the basic ideology for the development of early Christian meal liturgy”.<sup>163</sup> LaVerdiere sees some minimal elements of the symposium in some of Luke’s meal scenes, but also highlights some significant differences.<sup>164</sup> For instance, in every extant instance of symposia, they are a stand-alone text and very lengthy, and in addition, the dialogue is shared between guests. Both of these points are lacking in the meal scenes in Luke. Karris also suggests the meal scenes in Luke revolve around the symposium,<sup>165</sup> but for a number of reasons that shall follow, this is not the case.

### 2.2.1. Intertestamental Literature and Jewish Hospitality

Through the 2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C.E. to the 1<sup>st</sup> C.E., Jewish literature repeatedly and clearly shows that issues of food purity were heightened within Israel. Pseudepigraphical texts pertaining to meal traditions fit into four categories: (1) providing food to the needy and strangers with the motivating factor being the Hebrew Bible; (2) in examples given from the *Letter of*

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<sup>161</sup> The most significant proposal comes from Smith, “*Table Fellowship*.” See also Dennis E. Smith, *From Symposium to Eucharist: The Banquet in the Early Christian World* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003). See also Osiek and Balch who note that “The Greek *symposia*, the Roman *convivia*, philosophical banquets, sacrificial meals, communal meals of Greco-Roman clubs and collegia, Jewish meals, and the Christian supper all had a common form in these centuries, although the diverse groups interpreted the meaning of the meal differently.” Osiek and Balch, *Families*, 193-94. Corley notes that Rabbinic literature in Palestine was familiar with the Hellenistic banquet motif, and therefore it “should come as no surprise that Jewish meal customs during this period were quite similar in form to those in the rest of the Greco-Roman world.” Corley, *Private Women*, 68. Mary Marshall sees only superficial similarities between Jewish meals and symposia, noting significant differences for Jews around dietary restrictions, illicit sexual activity, serious discussion of Torah, and an aversion to lavish feasting that neglected the poor. Marshall, “Jesus and the Banquets”, 162.

<sup>162</sup> Smith and Taussig, *Many Tables*, 47.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

<sup>164</sup> LaVerdiere mentions Levi (5:27-39) the three Pharisee dinners (7:36-50; 11:37-54; 14:1-35), and the Last Supper (22:14-38). LaVerdiere, *Dining in the Kingdom*, 18. LaVerdiere, 16-21, also categorises the ten meal scenes he lists in Luke as being either formal (symposia) or informal (hospitality). I think such categories are forced onto the text and unwarranted.

<sup>165</sup> *ibid.*, 8-9.

*Aristeas*, *Jubilees*, *Joseph and Aseneth*, and *Sentences*, table-fellowship and the associated boundary markers portray the ethno-religious commitment on the part of the Jews to distinguish their meal traditions and table-fellowship from the Gentiles around them; (3) a large body of texts including *1* and *2 Enoch*, the *Sybilline Oracles*, the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, the *Letter of Aristeas*, *Jubilees*, and *Pseudo-Philo*, exhibit vice lists warning sinners of various kinds;<sup>166</sup> (4) the notion of an eschatological or Messianic banquet.<sup>167</sup> Before looking at some of these texts, including the Mishnah and Philo, Blomberg has stated that there are virtually no similarities in these Jewish texts with the symposia tradition.<sup>168</sup> We shall test this in what follows.

The story of *Joseph and Aseneth* (1<sup>st</sup> century B.C.E. to 2<sup>nd</sup> century C.E.), is an apologia of sorts attempting to explain how Joseph could have married the foreign daughter of a pagan priest (cf. Gen 41:45). Aseneth falls in love with Joseph, but a “Jew who worships God and lives on the bread of life will not kiss a heathen woman who eats food offered to idols”. Upon Joseph’s rejection, Aseneth fasts and weeps for some time, disposing of her idols and repenting of her conceit. God’s angel visits her on the eighth day and announces her rebirth, exhorts her to be an example of repentance for others, and promises her that she will marry Joseph.<sup>169</sup> One of the key messages in the story is that “Divine life...is obtained through the right use of food...and by the avoidance of the pagan way of partaking of them” (cf. JosAsen 8:5, 9; 15:5; 16:16; 19:5; 21:13).<sup>170</sup>

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<sup>166</sup> Blomberg, *Contagious Holiness*, 73-74.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*, 75. The messianic banquet is described in *1 Enoch* 62; *2 Enoch* 24:3-5; *3 Enoch* 48A: 9; *2 Baruch* 29:1-8. The Messianic banquet also appears in the Qumran text called the *Rule of the Congregation* (1QSa). The document depicts the end time when a messiah of Israel will arrive and gather the righteous at table drinking the new wine and eating together, and thus “the daily meals were to be viewed as foreshadowing of the coming, great eschatological banquet.” *Ibid.*, 83.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*, 78.

<sup>169</sup> James H. Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol. 2 (London: Yale University Press, 1985), 177.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*, 191.

*The Life of Adam and Eve* (100 B.C.E. to 200 C.E.) connects the issue of food with their banishment from paradise: “But after seven days they began to hunger and sought food to eat, but found none”. (1:1). Hunger persists and “Adam rose and walked seven days over all that land and found no food such as they had had in Paradise” (1:2). They find only animal food and lament a second time that they “found nothing such as they had had in Paradise”, where for them “there used to be the food of angels. (4:2). Eve is again deceived by Satan who tells her that the LORD God “sent me to bring you up from the water and give you food which you had in Paradise, and for which you have been lamenting. Now therefore come out of the water and I will lead you to the place where your food has been prepared” (9:4-5).<sup>171</sup> The faithful Jew is thus warned to be ever vigilant about what, how, and with whom, they eat.

The *Testament of Job*, written during the 1<sup>st</sup> century B.C.E. or C.E.,<sup>172</sup> praises the extravagance of Job’s hospitality by describing him as establishing in his house “thirty tables spread at all hours, for strangers only...[, and] twelve other tables set for the widows”. Furthermore, Job himself claims that when “any stranger approached to ask alms, he was required to be fed at my table before he would receive his need” (10:1-3). Job sets aside 500 oxen specifically to provide “produce for the poor, for their table”, and had “fifty bakeries from which I arranged for the ministry of the table for the poor” (10:6-7).

The book of 4 Maccabees, most likely compiled before 50C.E., has a remarkable story of heroic defiance in the face of the “arrogant and terrible” king Antiochus Epiphanes, who “tried through torture to compel everyone in the nation to eat defiling foods and to renounce Judaism” (4 Maccabees 4:15–5:38). An aged man, Eleazar, who was a leader from a priestly family, was brought before Antiochus who said, “Before I begin to torture you, old man, I would advise you to save yourself by eating pork” (5:6). After further mocking from

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<sup>171</sup> Ibid., 259-60.

<sup>172</sup> Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 833.

Antiochus, Eleazar replies defiantly. It needs to be quoted at length as it captures the depth of passion and commitment many Jews at that time had concerning unclean food:

We, O Antiochus, who have been persuaded to govern our lives by the divine law, think that there is no compulsion more powerful than our obedience to the law...Therefore do not suppose that it would be a petty sin if we were to eat defiling food...

Therefore we do not eat defiling food; for since we believe that the law was established by God...He has permitted us to eat what will be most suitable for our lives, but he has forbidden us to eat meats that would be contrary to this. It would be tyrannical for you to compel us not only to transgress the law, but also to eat in such a way that you may deride us for eating defiling foods, which are most hateful to us. But you shall have no such occasion to laugh at me, nor will I transgress the sacred oaths of my ancestors concerning the keeping of the law, not even if you gouge out my eyes and burn my entrails. I am not so old and cowardly as not to be young in reason on behalf of piety. Therefore get your torture wheels ready and fan the fire more vehemently! You, O king, shall not defile the honorable mouth of my old age, nor my long life lived lawfully (5:16-38).

The importance of food and Jewish purity, though in a less zealous manner than the story of Eleazar, is seen in the *Mishnah* where hundreds of exhortations appear concerning the lawful handling of foodstuffs.<sup>173</sup> For instance, *Hallah* has numerous lines of text pertaining to the types of dough that are exempt or subject for dough offerings. For instance, rice, sorghum, poppy, sesame, and pulse, are exempt from dough offering, as are sponge cakes, honey cakes, dumplings, and pancakes (1:4). However, dough which begins like bread but ends up being a sponge cake is subject to dough offering, as are bread crumbs (1:5). Regarding *meisah* dumplings, Shammai declares them exempt while Hillel says they are subject; however, Shammai declares *halitah* dumplings subject to the offering, but Hillel declares them exempt (1:6). And finally, a “woman may sit naked and separate her dough offering, since she is able to cover herself...[b]ut a man may not” (2:3 A and B).<sup>174</sup> Such parameters further highlight just how intrinsic the correct handling of food was for Jewish identity.

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<sup>173</sup> For a brief overview of the formulation and contents of the Mishnah, see Meeks, *The Moral World*, 85-91.

<sup>174</sup> Jacob Neusner, *The Mishnah: A New Translation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 147-58.

## 2.2.2. Essenes and the Therapeutae

It is possible that Jesus and the early Jerusalem Christian community knew about and maybe even had contact with the Jewish religious group called the Essenes.<sup>175</sup> Within the mid-second century B.C.E. to mid-first century C.E. Qumran texts, the issue of ritual cleanliness is paramount, especially regarding food and meals. In the *Manual of Discipline* (1QS 6:3b-8a), the features of their hierarchical communal meal required a quorum of ten men with a priest leading, and participants seated according to rank. Participants had to be ritually pure with some texts requiring purification baths before the meal, and the unrighteous were not permitted. Any food that had been touched by a Gentile was considered impure.<sup>176</sup> This will be shown later to be a point of divergence for Luke-Acts from the Essenes.

Josephus greatly admired the Essenes saying that “as for their piety towards God, it is very extraordinary”. He noted that their simple but exclusive meals were preceded by ritual purification bathing, partaken in a spirit of quiet reverence, began and ended in prayer, “and when they end, they praise God, as he that bestows their food upon them” (*Wars* 2.8.5).<sup>177</sup> And Philo noted that the Essenes “are above all men devoted to the service of God”, and avoid “cities on account of the habitual lawlessness of those who inhabit them, well knowing that such a moral disease is contracted from associations with wicked men”. They do not “own private property and their garments and food and other expenses are held in common, and they eat together at a common table” (*Every Good Man is Free* XII).<sup>178</sup>

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<sup>175</sup> Finger, *Of Widows*, 75-77. See also James H. Charlesworth, *Jesus within Judaism: New Light from Exciting Archaeological Discoveries* (New York: Double Day, 1988), 64-75. Meeks notes that it is generally accepted that the Dead Sea Scroll texts of Qumran belonged to the Essenes. Meeks, *The Moral World*, 76.

<sup>176</sup> Blomberg, *Contagious Holiness*, 79-81. See also Johnson who notes that the Essenes were not only “violently antagonistic” toward Gentiles, but also toward other Jews who were “corrupted” by contact with Gentiles. Johnson, *Among the Gentiles*, 117-18.

<sup>177</sup> Blomberg comments that “One could scarcely imagine a stronger contrast with the *symposium* form, which so often degenerated into debauchery.” Blomberg, *Contagious Holiness*, 85.

<sup>178</sup> Yonge, *Philo*, 689-91.

The Essenes and the early Christians shared similarities around the practice of sharing communal meals and economic sharing,<sup>179</sup> and eschatological motifs were present in their communal meals.<sup>180</sup> However, on the practice of commensality they diverged dramatically with Essenes practising separation from non-Essenes, Gentiles and sinners. Notwithstanding these differences, the common meals of the Essenes were a primary way of cementing identity and bonds between Essene members, and such meals gave a foretaste of the future Messianic banquet. Perhaps one contrast between the meals of the Essenes and the early Christians was the presence of joy in the latter, but not the former, due to the presence of the risen Christ (cf. Lk 24:40-43; Acts 2:46; 16:34).<sup>181</sup>

The first century Jewish monastic group called the Therapeutic society (Therapeutae), located in Alexandria, practised a more inclusive dining regime than the Essenes. In *On the Contemplative Life*, Philo records that they come together on the Sabbath “as if to meet in a sacred assembly”, where the eldest and most learned “speaks with steadfast look and with steadfast voice, with great powers of reasoning, and great prudence...explaining with minute accuracy the precise meaning of the laws” (III:30-31). Then they share a meal eating “nothing of a costly character, but plain bread and a seasoning of salt” (IV:37). Far from their Greco-Roman symposium counterparts, the Therapeutae “eat only so far as not to be hungry, and they drink just enough to escape from thirst, avoiding all satiety, as an enemy of and a plotter against both soul and body” (IV:37). But neither are these meals sombre and dull, but rather “cheerful” and “convivial”, as opposed to “the banquets of others...when they drink strong wine, as if they had been drinking not wine but some agitating and maddening kind of liquor” (V:40).

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<sup>179</sup> Finger, *Of Widows*, 147.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*, 159.

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*, 181.

Philo contrasts the Therapeutae with the pretentiousness of “the luxury and extravagance of the Italians which both Greeks and barbarians emulate, making all their preparations with a view to show rather than to real enjoyment” (VI:48). The guests at these Greco-Roman banquets are served by “well-shaped slaves of the most exquisite beauty”, and “some, being still boys, pour out the wine...[while others] are young men...having been, for a short time, the sport of the profligate debauchees” (VI:50-51). The Therapeutae, however, did not use slaves due to their belief that “nature has created all men free, and at all times and in all places” (IX:70), and they “practice a liberal, gentlemanlike kind of frugality, hating the allurements of pleasure with all their might” (IX:69). Philo, noting that some will scoff at this, explains that no wine is served, only water, for “these men are commanded to live sober lives,...[and] wine is the medicine of folly, and costly seasonings and sauces excite desire, which is the most insatiable of all beasts” (IX:74).

In comparison to the humble and simple meal of the Therapeutae, the Greeks and Romans have an “infinite variety of sweetmeats, and delicacies, and confections, about which bakers and cooks and confectioners labour, considering not the taste...but also the sight” (VI:53). These banquet guests display an “insatiable greediness...gorging themselves like cormorants, devour[ing] all the delicacies so completely that they gnaw even the bones. [And] having their bellies filled up to their very throats...their desires still unsatisfied, being fatigued with eating” (VI:55). Philo believes it is better to pray for hunger and thirst “rather than for a most unlimited abundance of meat and drink at such banquets as these” (VI:56).

Philo is scathing in his description of two Greek Banquets, one being Plato’s Symposium. For though it was “being commemorated by men who were imbued with the true spirit of philosophy...if compared with the banquets of the men of our time who have embraced the contemplative system of life, will appear ridiculous” (VII:57-58). Those who entertain “do ridiculous things” and “the greater part of the book is occupied by common, vulgar,

promiscuous love” (VII:60). Furthermore, they have “corrupted the age of boys” and possess “the mind of a lover of boys” (VII:61).

Returning to the Therapeutae, Philo, obviously impressed by their gatherings notes that women share the feast with the men and together they are “joyful with the most exceeding gravity” (VIII:66).<sup>182</sup> Sacred scriptures are read and expounded, there are hymns, Psalms, and songs of praise and thanksgiving sung in antiphon and in unison. There is dancing, inspired and spontaneous song, and Philo notes that the “ideas were beautiful, the expressions beautiful, and the chorus-singers were beautiful” (XI:88). Unlike the drunkenness of the Greco-Roman banquets, they are “intoxicated all night till the morning with this beautiful intoxication, without feeling their heads heavy or closing their eyes for sleep, but being even more awake than when they came to the feast” (XI:89). They pray and praise God as the sun rises and depart “with the intention of again practising the usual philosophy to which they had been wont to devote themselves” (XI:89). Philo concludes his obvious approval of the Therapeutae calling them “citizens of heaven and of the world, and very acceptable to the Father and Creator of the universe because of their virtue, which has procured them his love as their most appropriate reward, which far surpasses all the gifts of fortune, and conducts them to the very summit and perfection of happiness” (XI:90).<sup>183</sup>

There were, of course, exceptions to the austere dining practices in the intertestamental period, most notably among Jewish aristocracy who assimilated and embraced some of the more decadent forms of the Hellenistic world. However, as Blomberg notes, “despite superficial similarities between the feasts of ancient Judaism and the *symposia* of Greece

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<sup>182</sup> Although the sources concerning Jewish meal practices in first century Palestine are diverse, Corley, 71, summarises what we can glean, “it seems that Jewish men expected to find married women at a banquet, that women were required to recline next to their husbands at the Passover Seder, and that certain wealthy Jewish women participated in the communal meals of an ascetic Jewish community in Alexandria. Such table practises would have been notable in any Greco-Roman context and may in part explain the accusations of promiscuity levelled against Jewish women.”

<sup>183</sup> All previous quotations from Philo, *On the Contemplative Life*, from Yonge, *Philo*, 698–706.



and Rome...the main impression one receives as one reads the primary literature on these two traditions is the sense of two reasonably distinct worlds.”<sup>184</sup>

It is clear from this brief engagement with Jewish texts concerning food and meals that the Greco-Roman banquet tradition as manifested in the symposium is a distinctive and separate practice not taken over by the Jews. Moreover, it is highly unlikely that Jesus, the early church, and for that matter, Luke, saw any benefit in emulating the Greco-Roman banquet tradition.<sup>185</sup> That the *symposia shares similar characteristics with Jewish and early Christian meals practices, such as displayed in Luke’s Gospel, is not adequate evidence to a wholesale adoption by the latter of the former.* Some further comment is in order to support this claim.

In favour of Smith’s assertions, Finger notes that in some Greco-Roman literature the banquet motif is employed as a literary creation and secondly, that Jesus’ meal scenes in the Gospels are largely ceremonial and formal, thus fitting the literary motif of the Greek symposium.<sup>186</sup> Finger counters these assertions by Smith by stating, first, that “many of the meals mentioned in the Gospels *are* special events, so they would be more likely to take on formal ambience.”<sup>187</sup> Secondly, even poorer people are able to put on a special meal and welcome honoured guests with formality. Thirdly, one of the arguments for the idealisation of the meals of Jesus is that every time in the Gospels a position at a meal is described, the term “recline” is used. Only the wealthier people who had room and means would recline at table and this looks and sounds more like a symposium style literary creation. However, Finger maintains that the terms ἀνακλίνω, κατάκειμαι, and ἀναπίπτω, were general terms used to indicate one’s presence at table, rather than one’s bodily posture.<sup>188</sup> Furthermore, the

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<sup>184</sup> Blomberg, *Contagious Holiness*, 94.

<sup>185</sup> See also the rejection of the symposia hypothesis by Braun, *Feasting*, 136-44.

<sup>186</sup> Finger, *Of Widows*, 187-88.

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.*, 189.

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*, 190.

crowds in the outdoor large feedings (cf. κατακλίνετε, Lk 9:14) all recline and according to Finger the “atmosphere is anything but an upper-class dining room with couches and slaves to cook and serve”.<sup>189</sup>

On one level it may seem of little consequence whether Luke is importing the symposia tradition concerning Jesus’ meal scenes. But it is important to establish for several reasons. Firstly, the symposium was a meal for the wealthy and for the elite. We shall see that Luke has a particular emphasis on the poor and warns about the trappings of wealth. Why would he then import an elitist and aristocratic meal form and place Jesus in it? This goes against the way Luke presents Jesus and the way he raises the status of the poor, and also the way he challenges the undue emphasis on riches.

Secondly, I am arguing that Luke displays domestic hospitality as manifested in meals, as a means to facilitate and extend the mission of Jesus and the early church. As a result he is enabling those who are the preparers of hospitality, mostly women, to participate in the mission of Jesus through their ministry at table. The home and the table with the women and slaves, rather than the temple and the altar with the priests, becomes the locus of God’s presence and work. Therefore, if Luke was using the symposia form for the meal scenes of Jesus, he would be working against the other aims we see present in his Gospel. For Luke to place Jews such as Pharisees with Jesus at symposia meals would have ostracised Jewish listeners and served no purposes at all. And if, as some have argued, Luke is using the symposia model to appeal to a Gentile audience, then why only have Jesus dine with Jews?

One last point can be made and it is this. As noted earlier, dining with others at a meal will share similar characteristics and patterns across cultures and across history. This is the case because there are fairly limited ways to share a meal. For instance, food will be present, as will guests; the presence of a host is hardly noteworthy, and nor is conversation. Guests may

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<sup>189</sup> Ibid.

sit or recline, or possibly stand, but these three postures are the only viable possibilities. Therefore, we must be very cautious in noting similarities in one scantily documented meal tradition such as the symposium and “force-feeding” those similarities into a text like Luke. That there are similarities is not contested; but these are best viewed due to the universal practice of dining sharing similar traits across culture and across time.<sup>190</sup>

While the symposia hypothesis of Smith et al, if correct, is not detrimental to my thesis that Luke uses domestic hospitality through meals to aid the mission of Jesus and the early church, it is important to establish that Luke has more in mind than “idealised” or “symbolic” meals. That is, the house churches that he writes for are sharing actual meals and I am positing that he wants the meals of Jesus in his Gospel to be considered such. That being said, I believe enough evidence has been offered to at least cast significant doubt on the symposia hypothesis.

### **2.3. Conclusions**

We have seen that the practice of hospitality in the wider culture of the ancient Near East, was cultivated as a type of sacred bond intrinsically connected to one’s survival. What cemented the reverence for the guest/host relationship were notions of honour and shame.

Secondly, the Jewish approach to food was rooted in the conviction that God was both Creator and Creation’s Host. Yahweh’s provision of food was a key characteristic in covenantal faithfulness. Thus, food was gift and who one ate with and what one ate were

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<sup>190</sup> See Corley who notes “The sequence of meals, their cuisine, and the elements of their preparation, however, are very resistant to innovation. Meal practices are among the most conservative aspects of society; they often maintain and stabilize social systems, rather than change them”. Corley, *Private Women*, 25. Therefore, when Springs Steele argues that “Luke is employing a number of the typical characters of the Hellenistic symposium (host, chief guest, and invited guests)”, we can simply ask the following: Are symposia meal settings unique in having a host, chief guest, and invited guests? Of course they are not. Such things can be found in meal settings universally. E. Springs Steele, “Luke 11:37-54: A Modified Hellenistic Symposium?,” *JBL* 103, no. 3 (1984): 386. I have personally attended many dinners where there is a host (or hosts), a special guest (or guests), two to three courses, speeches, and conversation and drinks after dinner. All of these things were present in the Greco-Roman symposia too.

key identity markers for Israel. Significant events in the life of Israel were often connected with food and eating. And though hospitality was therefore valued and practised, it was mostly done so among fellow Israelites, rather than with foreigners.

Thirdly, in ancient Greece, hospitality was considered a virtue and a quality, and represented an important measure in gauging one's civility. By contrast, Greco-Roman notions of hospitality tended to have a stronger emphasis on reciprocity and were generally a practice among equals.

Fourthly, we considered the Greco-Roman banquet tradition in contrast to Jewish intertestamental literature and concluded that although there are similarities in form, the content and essence of the dining were in fact worlds apart. We also saw how the Jews in this intertestamental period sharpened their practice and regard for observing dietary laws and exclusive commensality. Meals for the Essenes and the Therapeutae were marked with prayer, reverent exposition of the law at table, and rejection of culinary luxuries and gluttonous revelry. Their mealtimes were sacred events that deepened their bonds with one another, but also with God.

This broad overview helps to place hospitality in context as we seek to examine Luke's Gospel and the meals of Jesus therein. Luke-Acts was compiled within this Greco-Roman cultural milieu, and with the historical and religious backdrop of the Hebrew Bible and various Jewish sects. Luke, however, navigates a course through the elitism and ostentatiousness of Greco-Roman symposia, the Platonic aversion of cooks and feasting seen in Philo, and the nuances of divine gift and joy that characterised food and meals in the Hebrew Bible. To this end, Luke shows Jesus to be a frequent diner, even being labelled a "glutton and drunkard", and emphasises that domestic hospitality through meals was central to the mission of Jesus and the early church. To this analysis we now turn.

## Chapter 2: Mission and Ministry in the Domestic Meal scenes of Luke's Gospel

### 1. Methodology

The commensality of Jesus is present in all four Gospels, however, in Luke's Gospel the prevalence of food images and Jesus at table predominates.<sup>191</sup> The primary motivation for limiting the study to Luke is the occurrence of a number of uniquely Lukan hospitality events compared to Matthew, Mark and John.

Concerning the composition of Luke-Acts, one author has remarked that it is one of the greatest literary accomplishments of the ancient world.<sup>192</sup> This may seem a trifle generous; however, there is no doubt that Luke's literary skills are enthralling. While I accept the importance of dealing with Luke-Acts as a whole, the focus of this study will, by and large, remain solely within Luke's Gospel, but I will refer to Acts when I consider it necessary.<sup>193</sup> Regarding issues of authorship,<sup>194</sup> date,<sup>195</sup> composition and structure, intended audience and purpose,<sup>196</sup> it is not my intention to conduct extensive analysis. However, some remarks are in order.

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<sup>191</sup> For a complete list of food references in Luke see Karris, *Eating*, 16-23.

<sup>192</sup> Paul Borgman, *The Way According to Luke: Hearing the Whole Story of Luke-Acts* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), ix, 1.

<sup>193</sup> Fitzmyer's point on the necessity of "keeping an eye" on Acts when dealing with Luke is still an important one. Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke I-IX*, ABD (Garden City: Doubleday, 1981), 7.

<sup>194</sup> Nolland sees no reason to doubt the author being Luke the physician. John Nolland, *Luke 1-9:20*, vol. 35A, WBC (Dallas: Word, 1989), xxxvii-xxxiv. Others who favour this view are Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, vol. 3, SP (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1991), 2-3; Robert C. Tannehill, *Luke*, Abingdon New Testament Commentaries (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), 20-24; Fitzmyer, *Luke I-IX*, 35-53. I take the position of Joel Green who states that the uncertain identity of the author makes no real bearing on interpretive work. Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids: Wm B. Eerdmans, 1997), 20-21. This point was also made by Fitzmyer, *Luke I-IX*, 53. For the purposes of this paper then, the term "Luke" does not refer to an identifiable person, but to the unknown author of Luke-Acts.

<sup>195</sup> The general consensus on date is somewhere within 70 to 90 C.E.

<sup>196</sup> Joseph Fitzmyer posited that Luke's preponderance of OT references clearly show he wanted to emphasise the "connection and the continuation between Judaism and Christianity", and also to present "Christianity as intimately related to the history of Judaism". Fitzmyer, *Luke I-IX*, 10. Brigid Frein notes that "Luke's Gospel displays family resemblances with other Gospels, with Hellenistic historical and biographical literature, and with various genres within the Biblical tradition. Yet no single one of the proposed genres can account for all of the major literary characteristics of the Gospel." Brigid Curtin Frein, "Genre and Point of View in Luke's Gospel," *BTB* 38, no. 1 (2008): 7. Moessner, however states that he is "convinced that the Jewish Scriptures were emblematic for Luke's way of rewriting the events of Jesus". David P. Moessner, *Lord*

Firstly, the widely held scholarly consensus that both Matthew and Luke used Mark as a primary source,<sup>197</sup> and another source termed “Q”,<sup>198</sup> seems the best working hypothesis currently.<sup>199</sup> Secondly, issues surrounding the historical Jesus will be side-lined in favour of the Lukan Jesus being the focus. Unless otherwise stated, when referring to “Jesus” in Chapter 2, the Lukan Jesus will be in view. Thirdly, and more pertinent to this study, is the issue of the intended purpose of the composition of Luke-Acts. Tradition ascribes to the Gospel writers the title of Evangelists, and rightly so; however, there is no doubt that they were also theologians who shaped, edited, and artistically presented the memory of Jesus.<sup>200</sup> However, such a topic of “intended audience” in contemporary scholarship is fraught with difficulty. In a postmodern climate, the death of the author assumes we cannot accurately know who “Luke” was writing for nor his intentions in writing. However, we do have the internal witness of the text that implies Luke’s intention was to organise the various

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*of the Banquet: The Literary and Theological Significance of the Lukan Travel Narrative* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 1989), xviii. Ben Witherington cites the work of Fitzmyer and notes that Luke tends to follow the LXX in his OT quotations rather than the Hebrew OT. Many of these quotes seek to make Christological points, but Witherington is not convinced Luke saw himself as simply writing biblical history in the vein of the OT. “Luke’s concern is with salvation history, the story of the age inaugurated by the coming of the Messiah on the stage of human history, especially beginning with his baptism... a history which reaches a further stage of development after the death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus because the Spirit which brings about salvation is only sent after Jesus leaves the earth”. Witherington, *Acts of the Apostles*, 123-24.

<sup>197</sup> Of Mark’s 660 verses, Luke used around 560 verses and Matthew close to 600.

<sup>198</sup> See the recent and brief book by one of the most influential modern scholars concerning the Q hypothesis: John S. Kloppenborg, *Q, the Earliest Gospel: An Introduction to the Original Stories and Sayings of Jesus* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008). See also Dunn who accepts Q as a working hypothesis, however, he sees a number of difficulties with the way the hypothesis has been over-extended by Kloppenborg and others. Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 147-60.

<sup>199</sup> Perhaps the most significant challenge to this has come from Richard Bauckham who has questioned the generally accepted view that the four Evangelists were writing from within and for specific communities. Richard Bauckham, *The Gospels for all Christians: Rethinking the Gospel Audiences* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998). The theory is not without support, however, see the critical response posed by David Sim who states, firstly, in support of the thesis that “Bauckham has correctly drawn attention to a serious problem in modern Gospel studies...[where] scholars have merely presumed the reality of the four Gospel communities and not provided any evidence for their existence.” However, among other criticisms of Bauckham’s thesis, Sim notes that “demonstrating that scholars have assumed certain things about the Gospel communities is not the same as showing that these assumptions are wrong.” David C. Sim, “The Gospels for All Christians? A Response to Richard Bauckham,” *JSNT* 24, no. 2 (2001): 21.

<sup>200</sup> For a recent overview of the plethora of scholarship on current issues regarding the Synoptic gospels, see David C. Sim, “The Synoptic Gospels,” *ExpT* 119, no. 7 (2008): 313-19. For an overview of current views and historical ones concerning “the position that Luke was the product of a significant redactional revision after the time of Marcion”, see Dieter T. Roth, “Marcion’s Gospel and Luke: The History of Research in Current Debate,” *JBL* 127, no. 3 (2008). Joel B. Green points out that all history is biased to some degree, so this is no surprise. He adds that Luke can rightly be considered a work of historiographical narrative. Green, *Luke*, 6-10.

accounts and traditions concerning the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus into an orderly account (Lk 1:1-4).<sup>201</sup> Furthermore, we understand something of the oral culture in which Luke wrote his Gospel, and therefore that it was meant to be read aloud and listened to communally, rather than studied privately, pericope by pericope. This is why the narrative critical approach to the text is vital, for it comes to the text on the basis of its narrative entirety, placing issues of form and redaction as secondary. With this in mind, I will also consider an audience-oriented methodology to be detailed shortly.<sup>202</sup>

### 1.1. Sources and Method (Narrative Theology)

In his narrative study on Luke 1-2, Mark Coleridge notes the shift in Lukan scholarship in the 1970's from a redaction approach to a literary critical approach. The former focused on theological intent through a strong reliance on sources and redaction, while the latter, not playing down the importance of Luke's theology, sought to approach Luke as an artist. Coleridge notes that while Hans Conzelmann and his followers were in the fore with the redactional approach from 1954-74, the new literary approach can be traced to Joseph Fitzmyer's 1974 commentary on Luke. The shift in focus included less comparison of Luke with Mark and Matthew, a side-lining of Conzelmann in favour of interaction with modern literary criticism, and focusing on larger textual units within Luke.<sup>203</sup>

While redaction criticism was largely interested in how writers arranged and edited their sources, narrative criticism skews the approach to focus on narrative content.<sup>204</sup> Coleridge sees the usefulness of redaction criticism, but also its limitations. His own approach to Luke advocates that "content and form, theology and technique, the 'what' and the 'how' of the

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<sup>201</sup> Frein argues that Luke's audience is primarily shaped by the First Testament and the literary conventions of the Greco-Roman world. Frein, "Genre," 11.

<sup>202</sup> On these points see Borgman, *The Way*, 1-7.

<sup>203</sup> Mark Coleridge, *The Birth of the Lukan Narrative: Narrative as Christology in Luke 1-2*, ed. Stanley E. Porter, vol. 88, JSNT (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 12, n.1.

<sup>204</sup> Coleridge states that "where redaction criticism seeks to trace the work of the evangelist primarily as theologian, narrative criticism is more concerned with the work of the evangelist as artist". Ibid., 16.

biblical text, are inseparable, the one determining the other in ceaseless oscillation.”<sup>205</sup> Coleridge suggests that narrative criticism focuses on the intent of an author in the creative employment of their sources, and why the author chose to compose the text in a particular fashion. In summary of the narrative critical approach, Coleridge states that “narrative criticism begins with the assumption that the evangelist has over his material a control which if not absolute is nonetheless real.”<sup>206</sup> Thus, a narrative theological approach to Luke’s Gospel takes as its starting point the final form of the Gospel and the reception of it in its original context.<sup>207</sup> However, this does not discount the need for analysis and the employing of the social sciences to help us better understand the shape and texture of the world the text was produced within; however, the foremost concern is to respect the unity and final composition of a text and engage with it according to its own structure, logic, and narrative flow. Robert Tannehill, who undertakes such an approach to Luke, suggests that “a detour through the experience of a first-century audience will enrich our own hearing and reading.”<sup>208</sup> The narrative approach is not concerned with, even as important as they are, questions of the historical Jesus and redaction criticism in relation to Luke’s Gospel. Tannehill proposes that we let “Luke’s portrait of Jesus emerge as clearly as possible by paying careful attention to Luke’s story of Jesus, with its unique features.”<sup>209</sup> This is in fact what I intend to do.

Shifting this narrative critical focus to the analysis of food and hospitality in the Lukan narrative, we will treat such events in ways that highlight their place and relation to other associated events and themes within Luke’s Gospel. However, since we are seeking to

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<sup>205</sup> Ibid. David Moessner succinctly describes redaction criticism as “a key to the history or growth of the various traditions that lie behind the unified text without, however, unlocking the unity of the text itself.” Moessner, *Lord of the Banquet*, 5.

<sup>206</sup> Coleridge, *The Birth of the Lukan Narrative*, 17.

<sup>207</sup> Regarding narrative criticism, see also Grimshaw, *Food Exchange*, 27.

<sup>208</sup> Tannehill, *Luke*, 19.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid. Tannehill, 20, does not reject redaction and form criticism as redundant, however, he states that the “contribution of each section of Luke to the whole should be considered, regardless of whether we can trace editorial changes or not.”



ascertain the way meals and domestic hospitality in Luke's Gospel aided the mission of Jesus and the early church, it is imperative to grasp some of the cultural and social dynamics of the period in which these practices occurred. To this end, narrative criticism as outlined above will be grounded by engaging in a concurrent social analysis of the texts. It is to a definition of this method we now turn.

## 1.2. Social Scientific Criticism of Luke-Acts

Since the 1970's, the social and political settings of the NT have been increasingly studied through the application of the social sciences to understanding the first Christian communities. Philip Esler in his work, *Community and Gospel in Luke-Acts*, argued that such an approach was needed to supplement the more traditional, and Western, modes of theological enquiry which centred on methodologies such as form and redaction criticism. Turning more specifically to the Gospel of Luke, Esler suggests that traditional critical approaches do not aid in "explicating the relationships between Luke's theology and his community."<sup>210</sup> Esler argues that both form and redaction critics "failed to utilize or generate a method for investigating social context."<sup>211</sup> In response, Esler proposes a fusing of redaction criticism with the methods of the social sciences to formulate a methodological approach to Luke's Gospel entitled *socio-redaction criticism*. In so doing, Esler distinguishes himself from scholarly approaches which utilise either of those methods to the exclusion of the other, and in so doing joins a wider group of scholars who employ social science methodology in order to more accurately understand the NT texts and times.<sup>212</sup>

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<sup>210</sup> Esler, *Community and Gospel*, 2.

<sup>211</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>212</sup> Sociologist Rodney Stark has shown that a persistent bias that defined religion as irrational has plagued historical social scientific studies. "The notion that normal, sophisticated people could be religious has been limited to a few social scientists...[and,] until recently, the social *scientific* study of religion was nothing of the sort. The field was far more concerned with discrediting religion than with understanding it. This is clear when it is realized that *only* in the area of religious belief and behaviour have social scientists not based their theories on a rational choice premise." Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Christianity: How the Obscure, Marginal Jesus Movement became the Dominant Religious Force in the Western World in a Few Centuries* (New York: Harper Collins, 1996), 166.

One such scholar, Jerome Neyrey, describes the 1986 formulation of *The Context Group*, which brought together scholars for the sole mandate of applying a social science hermeneutic toward biblical texts.<sup>213</sup> Neyrey notes that these scholars, though trained in the historical critical method, “enlarged it by calling attention to the use of the social sciences in the task of understanding biblical texts in their full cultural contexts.” In part, the scholars were responding to a “complexity in the fields of scholarship unforeseen during the years of university training when scholars mastered languages, archaeology, texts and the like.”<sup>214</sup> Such an approach did not adequately deal with “wholes” and “totalities” and was content primarily with “parts” and “facts”. The aim, for Neyrey *et al*, is not to depart from or reject the higher critical method, but to expand it to a higher level of abstraction by concerning themselves with “the examination of the social and cultural patterns and processes, manifest and latent, that were of primary concern to those who first heard the Lukan narrative.”<sup>215</sup> Such an important endeavour is not without its challenges, however; for if the historian is hampered in her attempts to study actual events and persons in their settings and sequences, how much more so the social scientist in the study of perceptions, viewpoints, and behaviour of people and societies long since buried in the dust?<sup>216</sup> This point is particularly pertinent when we consider that most of what we know concerning the customs and practices of ancient peoples was written by the minority of elites and the aristocracy.<sup>217</sup>

Be that though it may, the conceptual leaps, and informed generalisations, are necessary to glean greater understanding of the NT texts and social setting. The social scientific approach

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<sup>213</sup> Jerome H. Neyrey, ed. *The Social World of Luke-Acts: Models for Interpretation* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1991). One of the more significant forerunners of the social-scientific approach was Wayne A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983).

<sup>214</sup> Neyrey, ed. *The Social World*, ix.

<sup>215</sup> *Ibid.*, xii.

<sup>216</sup> Meeks notes the problems with such an approach but claims it is not a methodological problem only of the social historian: “the theological remover of specks from the social historian’s eye must beware the log in his own. To assert that only theological interpretation of the canonical texts is legitimate is surely only another kind of reductionism?”. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians*, 4.

<sup>217</sup> J. Patrick Mullen, *Dining with Pharisees* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2004), 39.

is not concerned with rare and unusual events, but rather with recurrent and common occurrences of thinking and behaviours that help us to gain a greater picture of Luke's Gospel within its social and historical setting.<sup>218</sup> In relation to hospitality, the social science approach is vital as it will aid us in understanding cultural norms, taboos, and practices surrounding how, when, where, and with whom first century people shared meals.

### **1.3. Narrative and Social Analysis of the Lukan Theme of Hospitality**

Lukan Scholar, Robert Karris, has proposed that the Gospel of Luke is a “kerygmatic narrative” and is more than both “salvation history” and “didactic biography”, and therefore “meant to preach to the reader in narrative form and to elicit from the reader an act of Christian faith.”<sup>219</sup> Karris also asserts that the theme of food is a central motif in Luke's Gospel, and summarises this motif as follows: (a) food as a theme occurs in every chapter; (b) Luke chose not to avoid reporting Jesus at table when he could have done so; (c) the food motif is present in every one of the significant contexts of Luke; (d) a powerful presentation of God is enunciated through the food motif; (e) the food motif appropriately symbolises “God's renewed union with his estranged people.”<sup>220</sup> Furthermore, Karris argues that Luke's food motif is universal and not culture bound within first century Palestine. Thus he states that the “kerygmatic story of Jesus' eating with social and religious outcasts resonates with all readers in whose cultures sharing food is sharing life”.<sup>221</sup> And as has been shown earlier, the culture of sharing food, and thus life, is a universal one among human communities.

Karris' comments are confirmed by two criticisms of Jesus and his disciples recorded in Luke concerning, firstly, his practice of eating and drinking with sinners and toll-collectors

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<sup>218</sup> Neyrey, ed. *The Social World*, xiii.

<sup>219</sup> Robert J. Karris, *Luke: Artist and Theologian*, Theological Inquiries (New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1985), 8. On this point of Luke's kerygmatic intentions, see Fitzmyer, *Luke I-IX*, 11-14, 145-62.

<sup>220</sup> Karris, *Luke*, 5-6.

<sup>221</sup> *Ibid.*, 59.

(5:29-33; 15:1-2) and, secondly, accusations that Jesus was a “glutton and a drunkard” (7:33-34). Both of these texts suggest that Luke sets hospitality as a key, perhaps *the* key, motif concerning the person and ministry of Jesus. Karris considers Luke 7:34 as a pivotal text in understanding how Jesus’ eating habits were viewed by his contemporaries, and suggests that Jesus’ eating with “sinners” are “acted parables” of the kingdom of God”.<sup>222</sup> Commenting on Luke’s connection of the Christian mission with the custom of hospitality Artebury believes that Luke intentionally chose the practice of hospitality as the most effective means of gospel transmission to Gentiles, for it best demonstrated the openness of Christianity to strangers.<sup>223</sup>

To take hospitality as a hermeneutical key<sup>224</sup> in the Gospel of Luke a step further, Koenig quotes what he calls a “sweeping assertion” by Paul Minear that for Luke “table fellowship as interpreted by table talk constituted the gospel”.<sup>225</sup> Koenig tests this assumption and largely concludes that it is correct. He summarises it as follows: (1) Luke writes primarily for residents who are local groups of believers in various places meeting as churches in one another’s homes; (2) Luke does not want to denigrate the legitimate ministry of wandering charismatic missionaries which still function in his own day; (3) Luke’s goal is to enhance the cooperative missionary effort between “guest and host roles on the part of travellers and residents alike”.<sup>226</sup>

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<sup>222</sup> Karris, *Eating*, 32. See also Wilson Poon who agrees with Karris that “Jesus’ table fellowship with all and sundry was an ‘acted parable’ of God’s unconditional acceptance.” Wilson C. K. Poon, “Superabundant Table Fellowship in the Kingdom: The Feeding of the Five Thousand and the Meal Motif in Luke,” *ExpT* 114, no. 7 (2003): 227.

<sup>223</sup> Artebury, *Entertaining Angels*, 179. Artebury also notes that in the NT “Luke provides us with perhaps the most complete pictures of early Christian hospitality...[The] Lukan examples of hospitality provide evidence that Luke was well acquainted with this social convention and that he often referred to it using traditional Mediterranean terminology.” *Ibid.*, 152.

<sup>224</sup> Brendan Byrne makes a strong case for interpreting the whole gospel through the lens of hospitality and believes that the overarching theme of hospitality in Luke’s Gospel is well founded and evident on the basis of an inner logic. Brendan Byrne, *The Hospitality of God: A Reading of Luke’s Gospel* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2000).

<sup>225</sup> Koenig, *New Testament Hospitality*, 119.

<sup>226</sup> *Ibid.*

Although Karris', Koenig's and Minear's assertions align with the focus of the present study, that meals and hospitality were intentional ways both Jesus and the early Christians used for mission and ministry, I intend to test this assertion through analysis of the Lukan text. We will view Lukan passages concerning food and hospitality as not just a means to an end for gospel transmission and ministry, but with the hypothesis that hospitality *embodies* the gospel to such an extent that mission and ministry are not solely the fruits of hospitality, but primarily experienced and manifested through hospitality.

#### 1.4. The Lukan Travel Narrative

A further hermeneutical theme that will undergird the analyses of the Lukan text is the thesis put forward by David P. Moessner concerning the Lukan travel narrative of 9:51-19:44. He describes his "uncomplicated" thesis as follows: "Luke's large "travel narrative" depicts a journey that had long remained unresolved, a "passage" of Israel that someday had to be re-enacted in order for God's purposes for Israel finally to be realized. In the central section of Luke's Gospel, Jesus, Messiah of *Israel*, brings that journey to its intended goal".<sup>227</sup> Thus the Lukan travel narrative runs parallel with the journey of Israel to the promised land, with Moses' foreshadowing of a "prophet like him" (Deut 18:15) fulfilled in Jesus. Moreover, "In Moses and the exodus journey of Deuteronomy, Luke finds a model for the prophet like, but greater than, Moses who brings Israel's journey to fruition."<sup>228</sup> Moessner adds that "Luke is laying claim to Israel's Scriptures as prophetically prescriptive for the public persona and impact of Jesus of Nazareth."<sup>229</sup> Moessner's description of Jesus as "Lord of the Banquet of the Kingdom of God" flows from the fact that the theme of "journey-hospitality" is a frequent theme through 9:51-19:44.<sup>230</sup> It is this aspect of Moessner's thesis that concerns us here for it will provide an identity in which to view Jesus

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<sup>227</sup> Moessner, *Lord of the Banquet*, xix.

<sup>228</sup> *Ibid.*, xx.

<sup>229</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>230</sup> Moessner provides a brief overview of the occurrences of "meals-food" and "household" imagery in Luke. *Ibid.*, 3.

in hospitality scenarios. Ultimately, for Moessner, “Luke alone of the Evangelists casts the entire public ministry of Jesus as the calling and fate of an eschatological prophet.”<sup>231</sup> Therefore, the reception or rejection at table of Jesus, the Mosaic prophet and Lord of the Banquet will result in either salvation or judgement.

### 1.5. Audience-Oriented Analysis

As we have noted, while the meal scenes in Luke as idealised Greco-Roman symposia is contested, we do know that the early church did meet in homes and share meals together.<sup>232</sup> That being the case, the meal scenes in Luke emulate those actual meals, drawing the audience into the meal scenes of Jesus as “implied guests”. To this end, John Paul Heil approaches the meal scenes in Luke-Acts with an audience-oriented approach that considers how the early audience, the readers and hearers of Luke’s gospel, may have responded to it.<sup>233</sup> In this sense, participation and fellowship is not only present within the meal scene narrative, but also through Luke’s artistry in drawing the audience into the narrative through identification with particular characters. Luke’s gospel would have first been heard within the locus of hospitality settings and we can thus imagine them as extended guests of the meal scenes Luke is narrating.<sup>234</sup> And as such, the Lukan meal scenes are open-ended in the way the audience is included at table, so to speak. The universal familiarity and experience of meals provides an entry point for the audience to participate in the Lukan meal-scenes, and thus, be influenced through identification with particular characters. The meal scenes in Luke are a type of portal in which the house churches he is writing for can see themselves. Jesus at table shows them what is permissible and desirable at their tables as they meet in

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<sup>231</sup> Ibid., 47. See also Karris’ comments about Jesus as rejected prophet. Karris, *Luke*, 18-20.

<sup>232</sup> Finger, *Of Widows*, 238; Meeks, *The First Urban Christians*, 75-77.

<sup>233</sup> John Paul Heil, *The Meal Scenes in Luke-Acts: an Audience-Oriented Approach* (Atlanta: SBL, 1999), 2-3.

<sup>234</sup> On this point and the aural-oral context of Luke’s implied readers/hearers, see Frederick S. Tappenden, “Aural Performance, Conceptual Blending, and Intertextuality: The (Non-)Use of Scripture in Luke 24.45-48,” in *Biblical Interpretation in Early Christian Gospels: The Gospel of Luke*, ed. Thomas R. Hatina, *LNTS* (London: T & T Clark, 2010).

the name of Jesus.<sup>235</sup> What happens at houses and at tables in Luke is paradigmatic of what can, does, and should happen among the houses and tables which are hearing the story of Jesus through Luke. In this sense, we need to consider, albeit imaginatively, how a house church hears and sees the narrative of Luke regarding Jesus in homes and at table.<sup>236</sup> Fitzmyer alludes to this perspective by suggesting that Luke is writing for the church to assure his readers (more accurately, “hearers”), that “what the church of his day was preaching and teaching and practicing was rooted in the Period of Jesus”.<sup>237</sup> Those churches are meeting in homes, around tables, and the Lukan domestic meal scenes provide specific pedagogical instruction to hosts, guests, and the women who are serving. Therefore, we need to imagine and consider how such household gatherings heard the message Luke tells.

## **2. Mission and Ministry in Luke-Acts**

In what follows, a working definition of mission and ministry will be established by which we can use as an interpretive framework when evaluating the meals scenes in Luke. Such terms have their basis in the NT, but it is unavoidable that contemporary and historical notions of these practices will colour and inform their definitions. This is not perceived as an impediment, for in Chapter 3 a theological reflection of these practices in the contemporary church will be pursued.

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<sup>235</sup> LaVerdiere also notes the pedagogical nature of the table hospitality motif in Luke for the Christian communities of the late first century. LaVerdiere, *Dining in the Kingdom*, 195.

<sup>236</sup> One further point on this topic was raised in a 1938 article by Donald Riddle who noted that the early Christian movement was in the first instance transmitted by “people, not documents, who spread the good news about Jesus. It was the spoken word – the human voice – which carried their messages.” Donald Wayne Riddle, “Early Christian Hospitality: A Factor in the Gospel Transmission,” *JBL* 57, no. 2 (1938): 145. Riddle’s novel point is that the eventual composition of the Gospels relied on domestic hospitality. For a recent and extensive treatment of oral tradition and the Synoptic Gospels, see Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 192-254. For Dunn’s response to some criticisms of his oral Jesus tradition thesis, see James D. G. Dunn, “Eyewitnesses and the Oral Jesus Tradition,” *JSHJ* 6, no. 1 (2008).

<sup>237</sup> Fitzmyer, *Luke I-IX*, 9.

## 2.1. Mission

In Chapter 3 we will describe mission in more contemporaneous terms, for now we need to draw a clear picture on how Luke presents the mission of Jesus and the early church. To put it simply, the nature of mission in Luke-Acts is that God sent Jesus, Jesus sent the disciples, and in turn, the church sends people on mission.<sup>238</sup> The content or nature of this mission is interchangeably called, “the gospel of the kingdom of God”, and “the gospel”. We shall therefore examine these terms in Luke to bring a clearer definition.

### 2.1.1. The Gospel of the Kingdom of God

The etymological roots of “gospel” in the Hebrew Bible signify a joyous, salvific, and victorious proclamation.<sup>239</sup> What is important to note here is that “gospel” has at its heart the act of announcement; it is, among other things, a verbal message, a “proclamation”.<sup>240</sup> Jürgen Moltmann states that the messianic mission of the historical Jesus “embraces his proclamation and his acts, his acts and his suffering, his life and his death. His proclamation of the imminent kingdom of God is part of his all-embracing mission”.<sup>241</sup> What this suggests is that Jesus’ proclamation and his acts were two sides of the one gospel coin; Jesus proclaimed a message *and* demonstrated that message through action. But it is much more than preaching, of course. The gospel transmitted to the first Christians is centred on and in a person: Jesus Christ. Thus, in the NT the content of the gospel is thoroughly Christocentric. But it is the oral announcement of “good news” that is at the centre of Luke-Acts, and thus in a Lukan definition of mission. While this is a particularly kerygmatic perspective on mission, it is based in the account of Luke-Acts. This is not to claim that such a definition of the content of mission is total and complete, but only that it is an

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<sup>238</sup> This is, of course, a specifically Lukan schema. However, contra others, Sanders does consider there to be a causal chain from the historical Jesus’ “own view of his mission and the kingdom to his death and then to the church”. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 334-35.

<sup>239</sup> Jürgen Moltmann, *The Way of Jesus Christ: Christology in Messianic Dimensions*, trans. Margaret Kohl (London: SCM Press, 1990), 95.

<sup>240</sup> *Ibid.*, 96.

<sup>241</sup> *Ibid.*, 94.



important, if not central, element of Lukan mission. As a corollary to this kerygmatic nature of mission in Luke, we also have the action of being sent (ἀποστέλλω). This is true of Jesus who was sent by God, and for the disciples who are sent by Jesus. But this also highlights the *missio Dei* nature of mission in that God sends (ἀπεστέλῃν) the angel Gabriel (Lk 1:19, 26), and John the Baptist<sup>242</sup> (7:27), to prepare the way for Jesus, who himself is sent by God (4:18, 43; 9:48; 10:16). Mission in Luke begins with the God who sends Jesus, then with Jesus who sends his disciples while on earth and once risen (Acts 9:17; 22:21), and finally the church in Acts also has authority to send in Jesus' name (8:14; 13:3; 15:22-25).

In Luke's infancy narrative, the Jewish messianic<sup>243</sup> and divine nature of Jesus' mission is announced to Mary ("Son of the Most High", 1:32-33), and the shepherds ("Christ the Lord", 2:11).<sup>244</sup> When Mary and Joseph present Jesus to the Lord at the temple in Jerusalem (cf. Ex 13:2,12), a man named Simeon was moved by the Holy Spirit<sup>245</sup> to declare to God that his "eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all people, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel" (Lk 2:30-32). While

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<sup>242</sup> The connection between John and the historical Jesus has received much attention over the years. Charlesworth, for instance, thinks it is likely Jesus started his ministry among John's community. Charlesworth, *Jesus within Judaism*, 16. See also Dale Allison who provides a good overview of scholarly positions on the relationship, or lack thereof, between Jesus and John. For his own part, while Allison maintains there are significant differences between them, "these should not eclipse the vital similarities, which bespeak Jesus' large indebtedness to his predecessor. Dale C. Allison, "The Continuity between John and Jesus," *JSHJ* 1, no. 1 (2003): 27.

<sup>243</sup> I use the phrase "Jewish messianic" loosely to highlight the way Luke places Jesus in the line of King David. Charlesworth has offered an important methodological observation concerning Jewish messianism, and states that "our only vehicle for learning about the messianism of the early Jews is their own literature; but the documents do not lead us back to the mind of all early Jews, are only a portion of the writings circulating at that time, and may not adequately represent the swirling and living dimensions of oral traditions". James H. Charlesworth, "From Messianology to Christology: Problems and Prospects," in *The Messiah: Developments in Earliest Judaism and Christianity*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 32.

<sup>244</sup> On Luke's use of "Christ" and some of the messianic expectations of Palestinian Judaism, see Fitzmyer, *Luke I-IX*, 197-98, 471-72. On Luke's presentation of Jesus as Messiah in the line of King David, see E. Schweizer, "The Concept of the Davidic 'Son of God' in Acts and its Old Testament Background," in *Studies in Luke-Acts*, ed. L. E. Keck and J. L. Martyn (London: SPCK, 1968). Luke's use of the Christological title of κύριος, is consistent throughout his gospel as a usual title for Jesus (1:43; 5:8, 12; 6:46; 7:6, 13, 19; 9:45, 59, 61; 10:1, 17, 39, 41; 11:1; 12:42; 13:15, 23; 17:5, 37; 18:6, 41; 19:8, 31, 34; 22:33, 38, 49, 61; 24:3, 34). In fact, Witherington has shown that as a Christological title, Luke uses "Lord" twice as many times as "Christ" in Luke-Acts. Witherington, *Acts of the Apostles*, 143.

<sup>245</sup> Among the four gospels, Luke refers to the Holy Spirit most frequently: "Holy Spirit" occurs in 1:15, 3, 41, 67; 2:25, 26; 3:16, 22; 4:1; 10:21; 11:13; 12:10, 12. "Spirit", when indicating the Holy Spirit or "Spirit of the Lord" occurs in 2:27; 4:1, 14, 18.

they are still in the temple an elderly woman prophetess named Anna “spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem” (2:38).

John the Baptist prepares the way (3:1-20) for Jesus’ public ministry, and although John εὐηγγελίζετο (preached good news) to the people, this good news in Luke points to the coming of the saviour Jesus, the one who receives the divine affirmation of sonship (1:32, 35; 3:22b), and the anointing of the Holy Spirit (3:22a; 4:14, 18a). Jesus’ first public statements in Luke (4:18-19) identify his mission and status as being the messianic figure of Isaiah 61:1-2, one who is Spirit-anointed by the Lord to εὐαγγελίσασθαι (preach/announce good news) to the poor, sent (ἀπέσταλκέν) to proclaim freedom for prisoners, sight for the blind, release the oppressed, and proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour.<sup>246</sup>

Jesus announces the imperatives of his mission by claiming, “I must εὐαγγελίσασθαι (preach/announce the good news) of the kingdom of God...that is why I was sent (ἀπεστάλην)” (4:43). And when messengers from John question Jesus’ messianic credentials (7:18-21), Jesus responds by referring to his healing ministry and that εὐαγγελίζονται (good news is preached/announced) to the poor (7:23). And when he arrived in Jerusalem after the long travel narrative of 9:51-19:44, Jesus preaches the good news (εὐαγγελιζομένου) in the temple (20:1). In the first missionary venture, Jesus sends (9:2: ἀπέστειλεν) out the Twelve who “set out and went from village to village, preaching the good news (εὐαγγελιζόμενοι) and healing people everywhere” (9:6). In the second mission in 10:1-16 involving the 70[2], Jesus sent (ἀπέστειλεν) them to do much the same.

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<sup>246</sup> On the Lukan emphasis vis-a-vis the Holy Spirit in Luke, Keith Warrington observes that “The significance of the reference to the Spirit is to demonstrate that Jesus is not functioning with a human agenda...The message inspired by the Spirit is good news for those who need it most—the poor, the captives or prisoners of war, the blind and the oppressed.” Keith Warrington, “Suffering and the Spirit in Luke-Acts,” *Journal of Biblical & Pneumatological Research* 1 (2009): 18.

In order to more succinctly define “gospel” in Luke, it is necessary to explore the elements of “the kingdom of God”<sup>247</sup> as expressed in Luke’s Gospel. Luke defines the kingdom of God very early in the piece when the Angel Gabriel announces that the “Son of the Most High” (1:32) will sit on the throne of David reigning forever in an eternal kingdom (1:33). In 23:42, one of the criminals being executed with Jesus entreats him, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom”. Thus Luke has “book-ended” his presentation of Jesus as the bearer and inaugurator of a kingdom, known in Luke as ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ. The essential features of this kingdom in the Lukan narrative are as follows.

1. *Healing and Exorcism.* Jesus is presented as one sent to “preach the good news of the kingdom of God” (4:43), and states this in the immediate context of healing the sick and casting out demons (6:20; 9:11; 11:20). In the second missionary enterprise when the 70[2]<sup>248</sup> are sent, Jesus instructs them: “Heal the sick who are there and tell them, ‘The kingdom of God is near you’” (10:9), and they return rejoicing that even demons submit to them (10:17).

2. *Judgement.* For those who reject the kingdom messengers, Jesus tells his disciples to warn them that “The kingdom of God is near” and declares that the fate of such towns will be worse than that of Sodom (10:11-12). In 13:28-29 Jesus teaches that it is possible to be “thrown out of the kingdom of God”. In response to a comment about “the feast in the kingdom of God”, Jesus proposes exclusion as a possibility (14:15-24). Future apocalyptic events upon earth are viewed by Jesus as portents of the kingdom’s arrival (21:5-36).

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<sup>247</sup> For a thorough and extensive treatment of “the kingdom of God” in recent and historical scholarship, see Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 383-487. See also Sanders who attested that it was “virtually certain” that the historical Jesus “preached the kingdom of God...[and] promised the kingdom to the wicked”. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 326.

<sup>248</sup> Metzger notes that in relation to the number being 70 or 72, the “external evidence is almost evenly divided”. Therefore, it seems best to list both possibilities. Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, Second ed. (London: United Bible Societies, 1994), 126.

3. *Preaching/Kerygma*. Jesus travels through towns and villages “proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God” with a band of disciples (8:1), and when he sends them out to “preach the kingdom of God” the accompanying instructions are to drive out demons, cure diseases, and heal the sick (9:1-2). Luke describes these disciples as preaching the good news which suggests that preaching the good news of the kingdom of God and preaching good news are synonymous and interchangeable (cf. 9:60).

4. *Present Reality and Future fulfilment*. Jesus teaches his disciples to pray to the Father “your kingdom come”, to “seek his kingdom”, and tells them that the “Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom” (12:32). When a Pharisee asked Jesus when the kingdom of God would come, Jesus cryptically replied, “The kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation...because the kingdom of God is within/among you” (17:20-21). Two things are clear: at least some Jews were expecting the future arrival of the kingdom of God such as Joseph of Arimathea who “was waiting for the kingdom of God” (23:51), and secondly, Jesus believed that the kingdom was already present (22: 16-18).

5. *Jesus as King*. Luke presents Jesus as king in the “book-ended” manner as previously noted, and this kingly portrait culminates when the crowds declare, “Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord” (19:38).<sup>249</sup>

6. *Disciples and the Twelve*. Jesus makes a distinction between those he calls disciples and “others” when he says “The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of God has been given to you, but to others I speak in parables” (8:10). The role of the Twelve in relation to the kingdom has a special place when Jesus declares “I confer on you a kingdom, just as my

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<sup>249</sup> In 23:2-3 Jesus’ accusers declare he “claims to be Christ, a king”. Invited by Pilate to respond to the charge, Jesus responds in the affirmative (cf. 23:37-38). See also Sanders who notes as “hard evidence” concerning the historical Jesus that “he talked about a kingdom....[and] was crucified for claiming to be a king”. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 322.

Father conferred one on me, so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel (22:29-30).

7. *Other Features.* The kingdom of God belongs to little children, and one must become like one to receive the kingdom (18:16-17). It is hard for rich people to enter the kingdom of God, but sacrifice on behalf of the kingdom is rewarded both in the present age with compensation for what has been sacrificed, and in the age to come with eternal life (18:24-20). And finally, serving in the kingdom of God must take precedence over kinship bonds (9:62).

As part of Jesus' salvific mission in preaching the good news was his repeated reference to suffering, dying, and rising from death (9:22; 13:33; 17:25; 20:9-18; 22:15; 24:20, 26, 46). Moreover, Jesus also demonstrates that he has authority to forgive sins (1:77; 5:24; 7:49; 23:34), and that his death and resurrection are intrinsically connected to the message of forgiveness (24:27).<sup>250</sup> After the resurrection Jesus declares that a message of repentance<sup>251</sup> and forgiveness of sins will be preached in Christ's name to all nations and that the disciples are to be witnesses to the Christ after they receive what the Father has promised: power from on high (Lk 24:47-49). While Luke's account of this missionary impetus described in the book of Acts is not in purview here, it is clear in Acts that Jesus commissions the disciples to be his witnesses (Acts 1:8), and that they are anointed, like Jesus was in Lk 4:22, with the Holy Spirit. It is also the case that in Acts the disciples follow the Lukan Jesus model by proclaiming a message in which the content was Jesus' messianic and divine status (Acts 2:36; 3:17-21; 4:33; 5:30-31, 42; 8:12; 9:20, 22; 10:36-43; 13:23-43; 17:2-4,

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<sup>250</sup> See Acts 2:38; 5:31; 8:22; 10:43; 13:38; 26:18. Witherington observes that this view of salvation as "forgiveness of sins" is Jewish, and is more central in Acts. Witherington notes this progression is due to "Luke's keen sense of historical development and process, for he is careful not simply to equate what happened during Jesus' ministry with what began to happen after Pentecost. Luke believes that with the sending of the eschatological Spirit the eschatological blessings of God's divine saving activity, including release from sins, begin to manifest themselves more fully and repeatedly". Witherington, *Acts of the Apostles*, 143-144.

<sup>251</sup> Sanders notes that "Luke emphasizes repentance and *reform* in his Gospel, and the same theme is prominent in Acts". Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 322.

18; 18:5, 28-9; 25:24-25; 28:30-31), as well as continuing the actions of Jesus through healing the sick and through casting out demons (Acts 2:43; 3:1-10; 4:30; 5:12-16; 6:8; 8:4-8; 9:17-19, 32-42; 14:3; 8-11; 19:11-12; 28:7-10).

Concerning the practicalities of mission such as lodging and food, Jesus issues specific instructions on what the disciples are to do when he sends them on mission. These directives are issued first to the Twelve in 9:3-5:

Take nothing for the journey—no staff, no bag, no bread, no money, no extra tunic. Whatever house you enter, stay there until you leave that town. If people do not welcome you, shake the dust off your feet when you leave their town, as a testimony against them.

Jesus is presented as one who “takes nothing” for his journey, and as such, in 10:1-16, Jesus issues missionary instructions to the 70[2] ordering them to travel lightly and also extends the instructions about lodging from 9:3-5 to include meals:

Do not take a purse or bag or sandals; and do not greet anyone on the road. “When you enter a house, first say, ‘Peace to this house.’ If a man of peace is there, your peace will rest on him; if not, it will return to you. Stay in that house, eating and drinking whatever they give you, for the worker deserves his wages. Do not move around from house to house. “When you enter a town and are welcomed, eat what is set before you (10:4-8).

At this juncture we raise the question, To whom were Jesus’ disciples to go to on their mission? Was it only to Jews within Israel, or were Gentiles included? For we shall see that we have no solid textual evidence in the Lukan narrative that shows Jesus eating with, or entering the homes of Gentiles.

### **2.1.2. τὰ ἔθνη**

The whole issue of Gentiles (τὰ ἔθνη)<sup>252</sup> in Luke-Acts is one of a chronological unfolding. We cannot make the case that because Jesus does not eat with Gentiles he neglects or side-

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<sup>252</sup> Sanders believes that one of the “surest proofs” of Jesus’ Jewish eschatology was the “the movement he initiated spawned a Gentile mission”. Ibid., 212. Moreover, Sanders, 218-20, shows that most Jews had an expectation of a number of Gentiles turning to the Lord at the end time, and that none of the

lines them in his kingdom mission. From a literary perspective, the following shows how Luke presents Gentiles, and how in Luke-Acts he is moving to an inclusion of them in the mission of Jesus, or more precisely, the early church.

Gentiles were called to repent (Lk 24:47; Acts 11:18; 17:30; 20:21; 26:20), were implicated in the murder of Jesus (Lk 18:32; Acts 4:27), were used by Jesus as a poor example of leadership and authority (Lk 22:25), and were responsible for sacking Jerusalem (Lk 21:24). One could concur from these descriptions a general negative tone toward Gentiles. But although we have no record in Luke of Jesus eating with Gentiles, there are some allusions to his acceptance of them. Firstly, the song of Simeon foreshadowed that the Christ would be a light for revelation to the Gentiles (Lk 2:32; cf. Acts 26:18, 23). Secondly, while speaking at the synagogue in Nazareth (Lk 4:25-26), Jesus praises two Gentiles: the widow in Zarephath, Sidon (cf. 1 Kings 17:7-24), and Naaman the Syrian. (cf. 2 Kings 5:1-27). The congregation is understandably furious. Thirdly, Jesus was willing to go to the house of the Gentile centurion, though it would appear in context he was a “god-fearer” due to his high commendations from the Jewish elders for building “our” synagogue and loving “our nation” (Lk 7:1-10). The centurion is the one who forbids Jesus from entering by expressing his unworthiness to have a Jewish Rabbi come under his roof. And finally, the post-resurrection Jesus says that it was foretold in the Scriptures that “repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations (πάντα τὰ ἔθνη)” (24:47). So while Jesus only eats with Jews, it appears Luke is moving toward an open table-fellowship that will include Gentiles. But this can only be established by looking briefly at the Gentile mission in Acts.

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factions in early Christianity opposed the gentile mission, but disagreed on the conditions of it. Finally “the overwhelming impression is that Jesus started a movement which *came to see the Gentile mission as a logical extension of itself*”. Ibid., 220 (emphasis author’s).

In Acts, Paul receives a divine commission to preach to the Gentiles, and though he continues to preach to Jews, they increasingly reject his message (Acts 9:15; 13:46-47; 18:6; 21:19; 22:21; 26:17; 28:28). Peter was also called to preach the good news to Gentiles (Acts 15:7). The result was that Gentiles became believers and followers in the Lord Jesus and received the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:45; 11:1, 18; 13:48; 14:27; 15:3, 8, 12, 14-19). The Gentiles known as φοβούμενοι τὸν θεόν (god-fearers),<sup>253</sup> assembled with Jews in the synagogue (Acts 13:16, 26; 14:1), and Jews and Gentiles joined together to oppose Paul (Acts 14:5).

However, there were disagreements on the way Gentiles were to be accepted (Acts 10:28; 15:5; 21:21), and consequently, Gentiles were advised to abstain from food offered to idols, from blood, meat from strangled animals, and sexual immorality (Acts 15:29; 21:25). Thus, Peter's heavenly vision and subsequent entering of a Gentile home in Acts 10:9-48 is perhaps the pivotal text in Luke-Acts concerning Gentiles. What is important about this story is that Peter needs a vision from God, repeated three times, to convince him to "not call anything impure that God has made clean" (Acts 10:15). The clear implication is that this was new knowledge for Peter, knowledge that he apparently had not received from his time with Jesus. Peter invites the Gentile guests into the house of Simon the Tanner and the next day leaves for the house of the Gentile soldier, Cornelius (Acts 10:23). The story is dripping with irony as the trade of the tanner was one of the most repugnant and foul trades of ancient times. Though not forbidden by Jewish law, its reliance on contact with dead animals made it despised and unclean (cf. Lev 11:40). Once Peter reaches Cornelius' house, his opening remarks reinforce his view that under Jewish law, Gentiles and Jews are not allowed to associate: "You are well aware that it is against our law for a Jew to associate

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<sup>253</sup> On the historical existence of god-fearers, and their importance in Acts, see Esler, *Community and Gospel*, 36-46. For discussion on how Luke understood and defined "god-fearers", see Witherington, *Acts of the Apostles*, 341-45.



with a Gentile or visit him. But God has shown me that I should not call any man impure or unclean” (Acts 10:28).<sup>254</sup>

The key point for the present study is that Luke has this knowledge of the mission of Jesus including Gentiles come from a heavenly vision, not from the life or example of Jesus. Peter does not hark back to the example or teaching of Jesus to justify this entrance into a Gentile house. Furthermore, the reaction of the circumcised believers (Jews) who accompanied Peter in relation to the Gentiles receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit was astonishment (Acts 10:45). In the immediate aftermath of this incident, circumcised believers in Jerusalem criticise Peter directly on the point of entering a Gentile’s house and eating with him (Acts 11:2-3). The upshot of the Jerusalem meeting is that Peter relays the whole incident and the meeting ends with acquiescence: “So then, God has granted even the Gentiles repentance unto life” (Acts 11:18). From this point in Acts, the focus moves to Paul who has been commissioned already to bring the message of Jesus “before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel (Acts 9:15).<sup>255</sup>

### **2.1.3. Definition of Mission**

What will be elaborated in Chapter 2 concerning the “gospel of the kingdom of God” in Luke is as follows:

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<sup>254</sup> Artebury plausibly suggests that Luke’s audience would have discerned three injunctions through reading (and I would add, listening) to Acts 10-11 concerning hospitality: practise hospitality to engage Gentiles with the good news, form relationships with groups where previous enmity existed and as a means of Christian transformation. Artebury, *Entertaining Angels*, 181.

<sup>255</sup> On the historicity of Jews refraining from eating with Gentiles, as noted in Ch. 1, Esler notes that this practice can also be evidenced from a number of contemporaneous authors of the period from the 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C.E. through to the classical period. During a visit to Egypt in 323-285 B.C.E., Hecataeus of Abdera wrote about the Jews in his later work *Aegyptiaca*. Although Hecataeus does not directly discuss Jewish dining habits, “he attributes to the Jews separateness from other people and an hostility towards them”. And this, maintains Esler, by definition would of course include dining practices. Apollonius Molon wrote and taught in Rhodes in the first century B.C.E. and was rather scathing of the Jews, considering them “atheists and misanthropes”. Apollonius saw the Jews “as unwilling to associate with those who had chosen to adopt a different mode of life”. Diodorus Siculus, who in 60-30 B.C.E. composed a world history, stated that the Jews “alone of all nations avoided dealings with any other people and looked upon all men as their enemies”. Diodorus also laments that the Jews did not engage in table fellowship (*koinonein*) with other nations. Tacitus writing in the first decade of the second century C.E. observed that the Jews “take their meals apart”. Esler, *Community and Gospel*, 78-80.

1. Jesus is presented in Jewish messianic and divine categories as one sent by God with a specific mission of salvation.
2. The kerygmatic nature of mission is readily established with the content of the message being interchangeably described as “the good news”,<sup>256</sup> and the “good news of the kingdom of God”.<sup>257</sup>
3. The gospel enunciates salvation as enacted through repentance and conversion, and putting one’s faith in Jesus as God’s Christ and Lord, who through his death and resurrection offers the forgiveness of sins.
4. Jesus enacted this good news through healings, exorcisms, and commensality.
5. The disciples/Twelve were sent out by Jesus<sup>258</sup> and continued Jesus’ mission after his death through preaching Jesus as saviour and Christ, and through continuing the actions of Jesus’ ministry of healing the sick, casting out demons, and commensality.
6. Luke shows chronologically that the logical extension of the mission of Jesus within Israel was that this mission be extended to include Gentiles.

## 2.2. Ministry

Ministry is a practice with wide historical trajectories that make it difficult to succinctly define. The NT definitions of ministry, for example, are to some extent context-bound with their particular communities,<sup>259</sup> emerging from Jewish<sup>260</sup> roots within Greco-Roman society.

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<sup>256</sup> Though Luke never uses the noun εὐαγγέλιον “the good news” of “gospel”, of the 54 times εὐαγγελίζω is used in the NT, 10 occurrences are in Luke and 15 in Acts.

<sup>257</sup> See Dunn who asserts that “*the identity of historical Jesus with kerygmatic Christ is the one basis and bond of unity which holds together the manifold diversity of first-century Christianity*”. James D. G. Dunn, *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament: An Inquiry into the Character of Earliest Christianity*, 3rd ed. (London: SCM Press, 2006), 247 (emphasis author’s).

<sup>258</sup> In relation to ministry among Jesus and his disciples, Dunn notes that authority and ministry were centred solely on Jesus, and “if he encouraged his disciples on some occasions at least to exorcise demons and to preach the good news of the kingdom, this was no more than Jesus pursuing his mission by proxy.” *Ibid.*, 115.

<sup>259</sup> Ellen Bradshaw Aitken, “To Remember the Lord Jesus: Leadership and Memory in the New Testament,” *ATR* 91, no. 1 (2009): 39.

<sup>260</sup> Robert Anderson has shown that the Jewish antecedents to Christian ministry were the traditional offices of priests, scribes, and prophets. Anderson suggests, however, that Jesus’ ministry went beyond these

But what we want to ascertain is how we should understand ministry within a Lukan framework.

### 2.2.1. Ministry as Service

The fundamental notion of ministry in Luke-Acts is service, which derives from Jesus' example of servanthood. The "service" word group διακονέω, διακονία and διάκονος refer to "table service", with the verb meaning "wait on tables". The broader meaning can be "care for one's livelihood", and more generally, "serve".<sup>261</sup> Finger narrows the more generalised sense of "serve" to explain that διακονία acts as a "go-between" regarding a message (spokesperson), agency (being commissioned), and thirdly, attending (performing tasks for someone).<sup>262</sup> Due to the general nature of the word, the important fact in interpretation is the context in which διακονία is used. Jesus refers to the table service of slaves and servants on a number of occasions with reference to the need for diligent attentiveness on the part of those who serve at table (12:35-40; 17:7-10).<sup>263</sup>

Luke uses the word group several times in reference to meal service and waiting on tables (Lk 4:39; 10:40; Acts 6:2), but also in relation to an office or calling (Acts 1:17, 25; 6:4; 12:25; 20:24; 21:19). But what stands out in the Lukan usage of the διακονία word group, is the frequency with which the word is used in relation to women and serving meals (4:39

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three categories and that he was portrayed in the gospels as "teacher and preacher...[.]miracle worker, healer, and exorcist." Robert Anderson, "The Jewish Background of Christian Ministry," in *Ministry in Australian Churches*, ed. William Tabbernee (Melbourne: Joint Board of Christian Education, 1987), 14.

<sup>261</sup> Alfons Weiser, "διακονέω," in *EDNT*, ed. H.R. Balz and G. Schneider (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990-1993), 302-03.

<sup>262</sup> Finger, *Of Widows*, 256.

<sup>263</sup> Whilst true that these passages refer to slaves (δοῦλοι), it is the instances of waiting at table in Luke that are being highlighted. The constraints of the thesis do not warrant a fuller discussion of differentiation between slaves and servants in Luke. (See Moessner who suggests that "only the disciples are the primary focus for the parables of stewardship and/or serving at table (12:35-38, 42-48; 16:1-9; 17:7-10). They, and not the Pharisee-scribes, are assuming the stewardship of the people of Israel in the Kingdom of God". Moessner, *Lord of the Banquet*, 222.

[διηκόνει]; 8:3 [διηκόνου];<sup>264</sup> 10:38-42 [διακονίαν]; Acts 6:1 [διακονία]).<sup>265</sup> Thus, in a key passage in Luke 22:24-30 Jesus describes leadership as those who serve (διακονῶν), and gives the example of himself as one who, though great, serves (διακονῶν) at table (v. 27):

The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who exercise authority over them call themselves Benefactors. But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves. For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves (22:25-27).

Jesus is using traditional female roles in which to describe the service of a disciple. Culturally and historically it is women who serve at tables. Thus, on the question raised in this thesis concerning the historical snubbing of cooks, while Luke does not overtly praise them, by describing Jesus as one who serves (meals), he affirms their διακονία.<sup>266</sup> For due to the limited administrative roles available to women, managing households and meals were highly valued.<sup>267</sup> Women in the 1<sup>st</sup> century were expected to oversee domestic tasks, be the primary carers for children and other various household members, supervise slaves, hospitably look after guests and socialise with her husband at outside events.<sup>268</sup> These characteristics are seen in the earlier text of Prov 31:10-31, where a wife of noble character is described as a domestic virtuoso who “works with eager hands”, and is diligent and methodical in the preparation of food and the organisation of the servants:

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<sup>264</sup> Although this text does not specifically refer to meals, given Luke’s frequent reference to women serving meals in his use of διακονία, and that the women were supporting Jesus and his disciples “out of their own means”, it is highly plausible the provision of meals is included.

<sup>265</sup> See Finger who presents an extremely persuasive thesis that highlights the women of Acts 6:1-4 were “helping to manage and organize the meals in various households, since meal preparation and administration was a typically female role in Mediterranean society”. Furthermore, that seven leaders are appointed and the whole community is consulted portrays that the issue of table-service was very important in the early church. Finger, *Of Widows*, 279.

<sup>266</sup> Ibid., 263.

<sup>267</sup> Ibid., 94. Margaret MacDonald highlights the fact, for example, that in the culture of the NT period, “the wife played a crucial role in managing the daily affairs of the house, from overseeing slaves, to guiding the education of children, to directing the replenishing of storerooms, to continuing to influence the lives of married children.” Margaret Y. MacDonald, “Kinship and Family in the New Testament World,” in *Understanding the Social World of the New Testament*, ed. Dietmar Neufeld and Richard E. DeMaris (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010), 35.

<sup>268</sup> Carolyn Osiek and Jennifer Pouya, “Constructions of Gender in the Roman Imperial World,” in *Understanding the Social World of the New Testament*, ed. Dietmar Neufeld and Richard E. DeMaris (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010), 47.

She is like the merchant ships,  
bringing her food from afar.  
She gets up while it is still dark;  
she provides food for her family  
and portions for her servant girls (vv. 14-15).

The household is her domain and its wellbeing and functioning are predicated upon the tireless labour and effort of this:

She watches over the affairs of her household  
and does not eat the bread of idleness (v. 27).<sup>269</sup>

Ministry as service is an important element in hospitality due to the nature of food preparation. While Luke highlights the role of the domestic sphere and the hospitality offered there as a primary means of extending the mission of Jesus, he nonetheless keeps the focus on the mission, rather than with those who serve the mission through hospitality. But that being said, we cannot therefore infer that such menial *διακονία* is undervalued or viewed as insignificant; silence does not equate with “snubbing” and on the contrary, such service is given a status and place of utmost importance, if not directly, certainly by implication. For it is axiomatic that if in Luke-Acts hospitality through meals is a means of mission and ministry, then by logical extension, the service of those who facilitate such meals has an honour and importance placed upon it, even if it is not explicitly stated. For if Luke likens Jesus to women who serve at table, then it is reasonable to suggest that undergirding his frequent use of the hospitality motif, Luke affirms and values those who serve within the homes to make the meals possible. However, we will see in what follows that an important caveat is placed by Luke concerning the *διακονία* of meals vis-à-vis the *διακονία* of the Word of Jesus.

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<sup>269</sup> Osiek et al note the obvious idealisation, but point out that the text, most likely from the late Persian or Hellenistic Palestine periods, reveals the position of leadership and responsibility an elite woman held in the household. Carolyn Osiek, Margaret MacDonald, and Janet Tulloch, *A Woman's Place: House Churches in Earliest Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006), 145.

### 2.2.2. Definition of Ministry

With this brief overview of ministry we can now propose the following to enable a working defining of ministry in Luke:

1. Ministry is defined Christologically in relation to Jesus' supreme example of servanthood.
2. Ministry as table-service is a repeated theme and as such accentuates the value and importance this ministry had for Luke.
3. Luke also uses *διακονία* in relation to an actual office or calling.

## 3. Domestic Meal Scenes

Turning now to a narrative analysis of selected texts within Luke, we will work through the texts in their chronological order paying note to how various themes and incidents connect and correlate with the wider Lukan narrative.<sup>270</sup>

### 3.1. Three Table Companions

A broad sweep of domestic hospitality within the Gospel of Luke finds Jesus dining with three main identifiable groups: Pharisees,<sup>271</sup> disciples, and forming one group, "sinners" and

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<sup>270</sup> The schema concerning meals in Luke proposed by Eugene LaVerdiere delineate the structure of meals in three categories: Jesus the prophet (in Galilee: 5:27-30; 7:36-50; 9:10-17; in Jerusalem: 10:38-42; 11:37-54; 14:1-24; 19:1-10), Jesus the Christ (22:14-38), and Jesus the Lord (24:13-35; 24:36-53). While I agree that Luke pays detailed attention to the chronology of the life of Jesus, I am not convinced that the delineation adds any explanatory clarity to the meal scenes. We can't, for instance, simply cut off Christological motifs from meals that happen before the Last Supper. LaVerdiere, *Dining in the Kingdom*, 24-30.

<sup>271</sup> Dunn observes that the Pharisees ('separated ones') have historically been treated with a Christian bias which juxtaposed their alleged legalism with the grace of the gospel. He also notes that although it is difficult to construct a full picture of the Pharisees, a few issues are clear: concern for purity, some degree of political and social influence, and devotion to keeping the law. Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 266-270. See also the helpful overview of Pharisees by Mullen, *Dining*, 39-77. Among other things, Mullen, 73, suggests the Pharisees' interests include "their ancestral traditions, the Law, purity, Sabbath observance, tithing, and public debate." See also Nolland's warning about undue negative portraits of Pharisees. Nolland, *Luke 1-9:20*, 233. See also Byrne, *Hospitality*, 112. Historically the Pharisees have been framed mostly in oppositional terms to Jesus, but I think Sanders is correct that this conflict has been overplayed. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 264-77, 290-92. Cf. Fitzmyer, *Luke I-IX*, 580-81.

toll-collectors.<sup>272</sup> The decision to include both sinners and toll-collectors in the one group is dictated by the texts (5:30; 7:34; 15:1; 18:10-13; 19:7). We shall see shortly that in Luke's Gospel, Jesus calls sinners to repentance and does nothing to gloss over what he considers their shortcomings and sickness.<sup>273</sup> The following outlines the hospitality and meal events in Luke (sections in italics are uniquely Lukan):

1. Simon Peter's House 4:38-41<sup>274</sup>
2. Levi's great banquet 5:27-39
3. *Simon the Pharisee and a woman "sinner" 7:36-50*<sup>275</sup>
4. Loaves and Fishes 9:10-17
5. *Mary and Martha's house 10:38-42*
6. *Jesus eating with Pharisees 11:37-54*
7. *Eating at a Pharisee's house 14:1-24*
8. *Zacchaeus 19: 1-10*
9. Last Supper 22:14-38
10. *Emmaus 24:13-35*
11. *In Jerusalem 24:36-53*

I will focus the present study on the following passages:

1. Simon Peter's House 4:38-41
2. Levi's great banquet 5:27-39
3. *Simon the Pharisee and a woman "sinner" 7:36-50*
4. *Mary and Martha's house 10:38-42*
5. *Jesus eating with Pharisees 11:37-54*
6. *Eating at a Pharisee's house 14:1-24*
7. *Zacchaeus 19: 1-10*

The feeding of the 5000 (9:10-17), although a meal scene, takes place outside and the focus of this study is on domestic meal settings. And I explained the reasons for omitting the Last Supper in the introduction. Secondly, the meal at the end of the Emmaus walk (24:28-32),

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<sup>272</sup> Toll-collectors feature widely in Luke (cf. 3:12-13; 5:27-32; 18:9-14; 19:1-10), and were open to both the message of John the Baptist and Jesus (cf. 7:29-30, 34; 15:1-2; 19:2). Mary Marshall's thorough historical treatment of the identity of toll-collectors leads her to conclude that those who followed Jesus were of reformed character. Marshall, "Jesus and the Banquets", 165-220. On the Roman connection to Jewish toll-collectors see Fitzmyer, *Luke I-IX*, 469-70.

<sup>273</sup> Guy Nave's examination of repentance in the NT shows that the things that compel people to repent are sorrow over sin, the threat of divine judgement, and the recognition of God's reign in Jesus. Nave notes that the key features of repentance in the NT are a reorientation of a person's thinking and behaviour in regards to sin, and in regards to how Jesus is received and perceived. Guy D. Nave, *The Role and Function of Repentance in Luke-Acts* (Atlanta: SBL, 2002), 136.

<sup>274</sup> While no meal is mentioned, they are in a house and Simon's mother-in-law is described as "waiting on them" (*diakona*). In fact, in the meal scenes in Luke, the meal is mostly implied rather than discussed or described.

<sup>275</sup> Regardless of the parallels in Mark 14:3-9, John 12:1-8, the story here in Luke has enough unique material to call it Lukan.

and Jesus eating with the disciples in 24:40-43, are both resurrection appearances, and the intention is to keep the study on the ministry and mission of Jesus prior to the resurrection narrative. That is not to say that I will not refer to these other meals scenes where applicable.

#### **4. Simon Peter's House 4:38-41**

The flow of the narrative heretofore has been intense with Jesus being rejected in his hometown of Nazareth (4:14-30), and then on a Sabbath, the dramatic scenes in the Capernaum synagogue (4:31-37) with the demonised man screaming out (v. 33: ἀνέκραξεν φωνῇ μεγάλῃ) while Jesus was teaching. Jesus then proceeds to Simon's house,<sup>276</sup> who has not yet left his work to follow Jesus (cf. 5:1-11), but nonetheless welcomes Jesus into his house to eat and lodge. That Luke does not introduce Simon may indicate he knows his audience will have prior awareness of his identity. Simon's home becomes a locus for mission and ministry.

Simon's mother-in-law is sick with a high fever, and when told, Jesus heals her by rebuking the fever. This is Jesus' first healing, and in Luke healings are a sign of the kingdom of God that Jesus preaches (cf. 9:11; 10:9; 11:20).<sup>277</sup> Luke describes that "immediately" (παραχρῆμα)<sup>278</sup> she arose and began to serve them (διηκόνει αὐτοῖς), which would indicate that table service is in view.<sup>279</sup> As previously noted, Luke frequently uses διακονέω in relation to women (8:3; 10:40; Acts 6:1-2), and each time it is in relation to serving Jesus or

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<sup>276</sup> There are a number of people named "Simon" in Luke-Acts: Simon the fisherman, also called Peter (Lk 5:8; 6:14; Acts 10:5); Simon the Zealot (Lk 6:15; Acts 1:13); Simon the Pharisee (Lk 7:40); Simon from Cyrene (23:26); Simon the sorcerer (Acts 8:9); Simon the Tanner (Acts 9:43). The way the narrative moves from "Simon's" house to the call of Simon (Peter) in 5:1-11 would indicate the house Jesus is currently in is that of Simon Peter. For an overview over scholarly consensus on the actual discovery of Simon Peter's house in Capernaum see Charlesworth, *Jesus within Judaism*, 109-15.

<sup>277</sup> The following lists Jesus' healings and exorcisms (in bold) in Luke: Women: **8:2**, 40-48, 49-56; 13:10-17; others: **4:33-36**; 5:12-14, 17-26; 6:6-11; 7:1-10; 7:11-17; **8:26-39**; **9:37-45**; **11:14-16**; 14:1-6; 17:11-19; 18:35-43; 22:51; summary statements: 4:40-41; 7:21-22.

<sup>278</sup> All but 2 of the 18 uses of παραχρῆμα in the NT are by Luke, and the vast majority of those in reference to healings and miracles (cf. Lk 1:64; 4:39; 5:25; 8:44, 47, 55; 13:13; 18:43; Acts 3:7; 5:10; 12:23; 13:11). It appears to be a literary device employed by Luke to heighten the dramatic element of those events.

<sup>279</sup> "Simon's mother-in-law can at once resume her household duties". Nolland, *Luke 1-9:20*, 212.



the early church, specifically at table. What Luke may be saying here to his audience is that women have a legitimate place of service in the church, and it is through providing meals for those who preach and teach (the itinerants), and for other members of the church. Once someone becomes a disciple of Jesus, they are fit for service, and women as leaders of the domestic sphere have a vital role in cooking for Jesus and his messengers.<sup>280</sup> While through 21<sup>st</sup> century eyes this may appear repressive, in that culture to have a position of service within a religious community was rarely the place of women, especially within the worship rites of the Temple. But here in Peter's home, Peter's mother-in-law becomes a minister of the mission of Jesus. Jesus has just preached in the Synagogue, stays at Peter's house, and then the following morning he heads out to "preach the good news of the kingdom of God" (v. 43). But in the meantime, her *δηκόνια* aids the mission of Jesus when Simon's house becomes a place of healing and deliverance for many who come after sundown (vv. 40-41). It is not insignificant that at the beginning of Jesus' ministry in Luke, a house and hospitality figures prominently. Therefore, we shall consider in more depth the role of houses and households in Luke-Acts in the mission of Jesus.

#### **4.1. Households and Hospitality**

Modern Western categories of family and household bear little similarity to how such notions were understood in first century Palestine. Firstly, households were not solely physical buildings in which dwelt a biologically related group of individuals. Individualist understandings of self would be foreign in the social world of Jesus.<sup>281</sup> The household was not the place you lived out and expressed your individual identity, but rather, the setting by which you received it. People in the ancient Mediterranean world were "dyadic", deriving

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<sup>280</sup> Fitzmyer notes that this story emphasises to the early church her service and gratitude, and that she becomes a "paradigm of other women from Galilee who will serve Jesus in the Lucan account". Fitzmyer, *Luke I-IX*, 549.

<sup>281</sup> Meeks, *The First Urban Christians*, 30. See also Meeks, *The Moral World*, 110-13.

their identity by way of their relationships and connections with others.<sup>282</sup> Secondly, hospitality in the society in which Jesus lived is termed *agonistic*, meaning that social engagements were always accompanied by issues of honour and shame.<sup>283</sup> Dietmar Neufeld describes this as meaning “Invitations to parties, hosting parties, arranging marriages, teaching with authority, healing, mass feedings, and gift giving are all occasions by which one may gain higher honor ratings for one’s family.”<sup>284</sup> Honour and shame are limited in supply and therefore competitive in nature, and may be ascribed, such as the family<sup>285</sup> one is born into, or acquired in the “never-ending game of verbal challenge and riposte.”<sup>286</sup> The agonistic nature of the culture in the first century is particularly pertinent to the way individuals responded to Jesus. In Luke, for instance, Jesus foreshadows the divisive nature of his message to households when he states:

Do you think I came to bring peace on earth? No, I tell you, but division. From now on there will be five in one family divided against each other, three against two and two against three. They will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law (Lk 12:51-53).

In relation to the need for houses as places in which to provide hospitality to Jesus and his apostles and missionaries, and the perceived divisions that could come to households through following Jesus, no doubt tensions would have arisen within households and even between them.<sup>287</sup> Adriana Destro and Mauro Pesce highlight that this tension could be

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<sup>282</sup> Bruce J. Malina and Jerome H. Neyrey, “First-Century Personality: Dyadic, not Individual,” in *The Social World of Luke-Acts: Models for Interpretation*, ed. Jerome H. Neyrey (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1991), 72-73.

<sup>283</sup> For a broader analysis of issues of honour and shame in Luke see Bruce J. Malina and Jerome H. Neyrey, “Honor and Shame in Luke-Acts: Pivotal Values of the Mediterranean World,” in *The Social World of Luke-Acts: Models for Interpretation*, ed. Jerome H. Neyrey (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1991), 46-65.

<sup>284</sup> Neufeld, “*Jesus’ Eating*,” 18. See Hobbs who also observes the agonistic nature of traditional Mediterranean society as “the context of various expressions of hospitality in ancient Israel/Judah.” Hobbs, “*Teleological Fallacy*,” 7.

<sup>285</sup> The family in Jesus’ time can be described as “a group of people bound in relationships of mutual reciprocity though kinship, both living and working together. It is also the dominant social institution in the lives of ancients, providing a source of identity, religion, education, and nurture.” Neufeld, “*Jesus’ Eating*,” 17.

<sup>286</sup> In regards to this verbal game, Neufeld states that “Rhetorical cleverness is a highly prized value in ancient Mediterranean societies.” *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>287</sup> For instance, commenting on table-fellowship motifs in the Johannine literature, Osiek and Balch see the nascent stages of schism and division between house churches. They observe that “house churches are

ameliorated by a distinction between household and discipleship, where the former is not voluntary while the latter is.<sup>288</sup> Furthermore, they argue that in Luke the house is central for the mission and ministry of the homeless Jesus (Lk 9:58), and that that while Jesus only issues a call to individuals to follow and not households, it is to the latter that “Jesus and his movement turn when they require hospitality”.<sup>289</sup> Examples put forward contrast the demands of the rich ruler to sell everything (18:18-23) with that of Zacchaeus who only gives away half (19:10), as the difference between “itinerant followers...[who] must sell everything, whereas sympathizers may adopt a less radical attitude.”<sup>290</sup> This is also the contrast between the disciples who leave a household to follow Jesus and the households that play a vital role in Jesus’ mission. Thus to individual disciples Jesus asks them “to abandon everything and to follow him...[and households] he asks to open their homes and offer a different kind of hospitality, one without reciprocity and social compensation.”<sup>291</sup> Their thesis is particularly persuasive in bridging the tensions that arose within and between households, and it balances the radical call of individual disciples with the practical needs for support and hospitality. It also highlights the practicalities of food and lodging that the itinerant and nomadic Jesus and his disciples would have depended upon. And this appears to be the case at Simon’s house where the hospitality of Simon and the ministry of his mother-in-law sustain and aid Jesus’ mission.

It is clear from archaeological evidence that the first dedicated Christian places of worship started around 314 C.E. However, there is some evidence to suggest that from around 50-150, Christians met in private homes, then from around 150-250, private residences were

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splitting off from one another because of theological differences. The effect on families who have been accustomed to communication with one another can only be imagined. Whatever the issues involved, this glimpse into early house church organization makes clear how crucial hospitality was for evangelization and ongoing religious education.” Osiek and Balch, *Families*, 207-08.

<sup>288</sup> Adriana Destro and Mauro Pesce, “Fathers and Householders in the Jesus Movement: The Perspective of the Gospel of Luke,” *BI* 11, no. 2 (2003): 213.

<sup>289</sup> *Ibid.*, 215.

<sup>290</sup> *Ibid.*, 231.

<sup>291</sup> *Ibid.*, 233.

still used but may have had alterations to accommodate the church, and finally, 250-313 sees some purpose built buildings, both public and private, for the church to gather.<sup>292</sup> Regarding any preconceived ideas about house sizes, archaeological research on Roman houses brings evidence to light that suggests Roman houses, unlike their more uniform Greek counterparts, were a varying range of sizes. These sizes had capacities for dining and entertaining ranging from 20-30 guests, to an astonishing 1,135.<sup>293</sup> Assumptions of the early Christian assemblies being no more than 40-50 in number have no basis in the archaeological evidence. This is not to say this was not the case, however, as Osiek and Balch suggest, “Gaius, head of a synagogue in Corinth; Erastus, perhaps an aedile in the same city; Prisca and Aquila, who owned a house in Asia and another in Rome; and Phoebe, Paul’s patron, theoretically might have owned [larger houses]”.<sup>294</sup>

The reason it is important to note the size of houses and to dispel claims that house churches would have been few in number, is to highlight the labour that would have been needed in organising and providing meals or refreshments for large groups. How was this organised? Who purchased the food, prepared it, served it and cleaned and packed up after the meal?<sup>295</sup> Even if we limit the house churches to 40-50, providing hospitality to such numbers is still a costly and lengthy undertaking.

There is little doubt that for Luke households were at the centre of both the mission and ministry of Jesus and consequently the early church.<sup>296</sup> In Acts, Luke portrays these hubs of

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<sup>292</sup> Bradley Blue, “Acts and the House Church,” in *The Book of Acts in Its Graeco-Roman Setting*, ed. David W. J. Gill and Conrad Gempf (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 124-25.

<sup>293</sup> Osiek and Balch, *Families*, 202.

<sup>294</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>295</sup> On this point, see especially Bradley Blue, who contra assertions by others claiming the church in Corinth had 30-50 members, Blue argues that it easily could have been 100. Furthermore, in Rom 16:23 Paul envisions the whole church at Corinth enjoying Gaius’ hospitality. Blue, “*House Church*,” 175, see especially n.219.

<sup>296</sup> Using homes intentionally as a basis for hospitality was an early and continued Jewish practice, especially on the Sabbath. Koenig highlights that first-century synagogues “functioned as houses of hospitality for Gentiles who wished to become proselytes or simply learn more about Judaism”. Koenig, *New Testament Hospitality*, 17. Charlesworth notes that the majority of synagogues in this period were large rooms within private houses. Charlesworth, *Jesus within Judaism*, 109.

mission and ministry by stating “They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts (Acts 2:46), and “Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Christ” (Acts 5:42; cf. 10:25-48; 16:31-34; 18:26; 20:20; 28:30-31).<sup>297</sup> Secondly, houses were places of healing (9:17-18, 32, 36-43; 28:7-10). Thirdly, Luke also depicts heads of households coming to faith in Jesus, and consequently, their entire households also believing. (10:25-48; 16:13-15; 16:31-34; 18:8). And finally, houses are depicted as places of prayer, gathering, and lodging for apostles (1:13; 10:6; 12:12; 16:40; 17:5-9; 18:7; 20:8; 21:8; 21:16).<sup>298</sup> It would be reasonable to assume that this is a natural progression from his Gospel where he presents Jesus and the disciples in such settings. And also we see the importance of Luke setting Jesus’ mission in the home of Simon Peter, sustained by the table-service of his mother-in-law.

## **5. Levi’s Great Banquet 5:27-39**

Lk 5:1–6:16 is a sevenfold section in Luke’s Gospel in which a number of individuals or groups respond directly to Jesus. In 5:1-11, Jesus teaches by Lake Gennesaret, Simon Peter and his fishing associates leave everything to follow Jesus, a leper is cleansed by Jesus touching him (5:12-15), a paralytic is healed, and Jesus claims authority to forgive sins (5:17-26). Immediately after Levi’s banquet, the eating and drinking practices of Jesus’ disciples, and presumably Jesus himself, are called into question by the Pharisees (5:33-39). Following this is more controversy surrounding Jesus and his disciples preparing food and eating it on the Sabbath (6:1-11), and finally, the calling of the twelve apostles (6:12-16). In

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<sup>297</sup> John Elliot notes that house/household appear in Luke Acts ninety-six times and refers to family, kin, personnel and property, which for Luke “makes clear the fundamental role which private houses and households played in the spread of the Jesus movement, the domestic form of organization it assumed, and the social relations and values it fostered.” John H. Elliot, “Temple Versus Household in Luke-Acts: A Contrast in Social Institutions,” in *The Social World of Luke-Acts: Models for Interpretation*, ed. Jerome H. Neyrey (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1991), 225.

<sup>298</sup> On these houses and householders in Acts, see Blue who suggests that they were not just providers of short-term hospitality, but most likely played a larger role in the life and formation of the early church. Blue, “*House Church*,” 188.

this section of Luke's Gospel tensions are rising as Jesus repeatedly pushes conventional boundaries and religious markers, and not the least is his choice of dinner companions at Levi the toll-collector's house. Contra Mark 2:14, Luke states in v. 28 that Levi "left everything" (καταλιπὼν πάντα) when he got up and followed Jesus. Luke Timothy Johnson correctly suggests that this reflects Luke's "concern for the disposition of possessions as symbolizing the response to God's visitation."<sup>299</sup> The offer of hospitality does to a large part require that the host has some property and/or goods to share with the guest, and as such, we need to gain a general sense of how Luke deals with this issue.

### **5.1. Property and Wealth**

In Luke's Gospel, the accumulation of wealth and the pursuing of riches is not a lifestyle that is advocated or encouraged, and the rich are challenged to renounce trust and dependence on their riches (6:24-25; 12:13-21; 18:18-29).<sup>300</sup> Prior to the call of Levi, in 5:1-11, Luke has already provided the account of Simon Peter, and Zebedee's sons, James and John, who leave everything and follow. Moreover, in 14:33 Jesus states "In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple." And in 9:57-62, though the issue of possessions is not in view, the call of Jesus is so exacting that relational and obligatory ties to parents and family are called into question by the call of Jesus to follow. Therefore, there is a clear picture in the Lukan Gospel that Jesus' call to follow him is radical and exacting on a number of levels.

Notwithstanding, it could not be said that for Luke abject poverty is the norm or requirement of the followers of Jesus. Luke portrays the early Church as sharing everything they had and claiming nothing as their own (Acts 2:44-46; 4:32-37). There is however no indication that this was commanded or forced communism, rather, it seems that this was

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<sup>299</sup> Johnson, *Luke*, 97.

<sup>300</sup> For a helpful overview of Luke's approach to the rich and the poor, see Fitzmyer, *Luke I-IX*, 247-51.

something that was happening voluntarily, but encouraged all the same. For instance, the disciples in Luke had “left all they had” to follow Jesus (Lk 18:28), however, this did not imply that the rich had to give everything away, as in the case of Zacchaeus, the wealthy toll-collector who gave away half his wealth (Lk 19:1-9).<sup>301</sup> Even so, the Jewish attitudes to poverty and wealth were much more socially directed than the Greeks and Romans,<sup>302</sup> with concern for the poor, aliens, fatherless, and the widow stipulated within the Torah (Deut 14:28-29; 26:12). Whereas the Roman property owners by law could do anything they liked with their property, the Jews were under covenantal obligations.<sup>303</sup> But this does not explain why Levi “left everything” to follow Jesus, though it may have been a display of repentance which Jesus did require of sinners in Luke (5:32).<sup>304</sup> That Levi hosts the celebratory banquet in his own home indicates that in the short term he still owned it, and has the means to purchase food. It is no stretch of the text to envisage that the “leaving everything” description of Levi may be referring to the immediate context of the narrative which would

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<sup>301</sup> In reference to property in the early church, Martin Hengel’s observation is still valid: “We cannot extract a well-defined “Christian doctrine of property” either from the New Testament or from the history of the early church.” Martin Hengel, *Property and Riches in the Early Church* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974), 84.

<sup>302</sup> See David Balch who argues that Luke is not introducing a new social ethic to his gentile hearers, but rather “is reinforcing these Gentiles’ pre-Christian values”. David L. Balch, “Rich and Poor, Proud and Humble in Luke-Acts,” in *The Social World of the First Christians: Essays in Honor of Wayne A. Meeks*, ed. Michael L. White and Larry O. Yarbrough (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 232. While it is evident that such values existed within Greco-Roman culture, this is not evidence for a consistent and regulated benevolence to the poor that would make it commensurate with the contemporaneous Jewish and Christian approaches to the poor. See for instance Rodney Stark’s description of the challenging living conditions of Greco-Roman city and Christianity’s superior attractiveness within such environments due in part for its care of the poor and sick. Stark, *The Rise of Christianity*, 147-162. See also Rodney Stark, *Cities of God: The Real Story of How Christianity Became an Urban Movement and Conquered Rome* (New York: Harper Collins, 2006), 25-62. Stark also observes that the general perception of twentieth century scholarship considered Christianity to be a movement primarily among the “slaves and impoverished masses”, and also from the “lower strata” of society. However, over the past few decades “a consensus has developed among New Testament historians that Christianity was based in the middle and upper classes”. Stark, *The Rise of Christianity*, 31. On the social status of Christians in the early Jerusalem church, see Witherington, *Acts of the Apostles*, 210-13.

<sup>303</sup> Justo Gonzalez notes that “Jewish property rights were limited by the rights of God, by the rights of the property itself, which must not be abused, and by the rights of the needy—the poor the sojourner, the orphan, and the widow”. Justo Gonzalez, *Faith and Wealth: A History of Early Christian Ideas on the Origin, Significance, and Use of Money* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1990), 22.

<sup>304</sup> See Marshall who states concerning Levi that as “well as indicating that Jesus did not require all of his followers to become itinerant, the comparison between the two men affirms the salvific value of Levi’s hospitality to Jesus... Thus, the provision of hospitality, especially to Jesus, is indicative of repentance, as well as being a means of salvation”. Marshall, “*Glutton*,” 55-56.

have Levi leaving his tax booth and associated business.<sup>305</sup> The ambiguity about this pericope concerning leaving everything is starkly clarified in 14:33 when Jesus states “any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple”. Luke tends to leave things like this without practical resolution. For instance, Jesus accepts the support of a group of women who are supporting Jesus and the Twelve “out of their own means” (8:3). Either they are not disciples (for they have not left everything), which is unlikely, or the renunciation of all possessions was not viewed as obligatory for all disciples (which seems more likely).<sup>306</sup> But perhaps it was also attitudes to possessions that challenged the disciples of Jesus. One’s home or possessions, though kept, were rendered in service of Jesus’ mission by providing hospitality for the needs of itinerant missionaries. Discipleship for Luke means that one be ever vigilant on the allures and trappings of wealth, practice generosity without reciprocation, and give to those who are in need.<sup>307</sup> However, the provision of hospitality presupposes the means to provide such things as food and lodging. Jesus appears comfortable to stay in houses and eat what is set before him without ordering everyone he meets to sell all their possessions.

Returning to the story of Levi, the accusation of Jesus eating with sinners comes from the Pharisees and lawyers, for until this point Luke casts no judgement upon the character and lives of the banquet guests. Regarding the question of the Pharisees, Luke changes Mark’s ἔλεγον (“they asked”) to the more theologically nuanced ἐγόγγυζον (“they grumbled or muttered”).<sup>308</sup> Is it irony that Luke is communicating to his audience? Centuries before in

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<sup>305</sup> Fitzmeyer thinks this is the case. Fitzmeyer, *Luke I-IX*, 590.

<sup>306</sup> While the issue of poverty and possessions in Luke cannot be dealt with adequately here, for a fuller treatment of the issue within the early church see Susan R. Holman, *Wealth and Poverty in Early Church and Society* (Ada: Baker Academic, 2008). For an overview of the issue of wealth and poverty in the Bible, particularly the differences between Hebrew Bible and NT, see Craig L. Blomberg, *Neither Poverty nor Riches: a Biblical Theology of Material Possessions* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006).

<sup>307</sup> Green, *Luke*, 229.

<sup>308</sup> The verb γογγύζω has etymological roots in the Hebrew Bible and is used by the LXX to translate the Hebrew *lûn* in the Israelite grumbling incidents of Exodus 15-16 and Numbers 14. Luke uses γογγύζω and its derivatives three times in his gospel (5:30; 15:2; 19:7) and twice it is used for the Pharisees and all three times the context is the disapproval of Jesus’ eating companions. See also 1 Cor 10:10 where Paul uses the



the Exodus the Jews “grumbled” against God regarding the issues of food and drink, and here the Pharisees are doing the same to Jesus.

In answer to the question posed by the Pharisees and lawyers to Jesus’ disciples,<sup>309</sup> “Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?” (v. 30), Jesus’ response in vv. 31-32 does not rebut the accusation that they are sinners.<sup>310</sup> Furthermore, Jesus states he has come calling sinners to repentance (εἰς μετάνοιαν). Repentance is a major theme in Luke-Acts,<sup>311</sup> however, the call to repent does not deter sinners from proximity to Jesus. (cf. 7:36-50; 15:1). And while the Pharisees and lawyers<sup>312</sup> may be aggravated by Jesus’ proximity to toll-collectors and sinners, Jesus later relates the parable of the lost sheep and the lost coin and exclaims that “In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents” (cf Lk 15:1-8).<sup>313</sup> In their defence the Pharisees were only acting in accord with widespread beliefs and practice, not only within Judaism,

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verb γογγύζω in direct reference to events of Exodus 15-16. These connections are also noted by David B. Gowler, *Host, Guest, Enemy and Friend: Portraits of the Pharisees in Luke and Acts*, ed. Vernon K Robbins, Emory Studies in Early Christianity (New York: Peter Lang, 1991), 199.

<sup>309</sup> This is the first use of the term μαθητής, (disciple), and Nolland claims it “refers to those who give up everything to follow Jesus (see esp. 14:26–27, 33) and involves hearing and doing what Jesus says (6:47–48 cf. v 20). From the circle of disciples the apostles are chosen (6:13), and for the most part it is the Twelve who represent discipleship, though the term is much broader (19:37).” Nolland, *Luke 1–9:20*, 246.

<sup>310</sup> This point alone removes any possibility of Luke seeking to frame this meal scene as a symposium, as cultural outcasts were not invited to elitist symposia.

<sup>311</sup> Contra Matthew and Mark’s three combined references to repentance in the preaching of Jesus, in Luke repentance features in the preaching of Jesus twelve times (5:32; 10:13; 11:32; 13:3, 5; 15:7 [twice], 10; 16:30; 17:3, 4; 24:47). For a fuller treatment of repentance in Luke-Acts, see Nave, *Repentance*, 145-224. On repentance and Levi’s guests see Gowler, *Portraits*, 202. On the inclusion of Pharisees if they repent see Green, *Luke*, 244.

<sup>312</sup> In this paper the terms “teachers of the law” translates νομικός (7:30; 10:25; 11:45-46; 11:52; 14:3) and “lawyers” translates γραμματεὺς (5:21, 30; 6:7; 9:22; 11:53; 15:2; 19:47; 20:1, 19, 39, 46; 22:2, 66; 23:10), both of which are interchangeable term referring to the Jewish scribes. See Baumbach who states: “The scribes were *exegetes*, interpreters of Scripture, who established its instructions in a binding way for the present; *teachers*, who sought to equip the greatest possible number of pupils with the methods of interpretation; and *jurists*, who, as trial judges, administered the law in practical situations (cf. Sir 38:24–30). They exerted their greatest influence through their teaching activity in the synagogues and schools for boys, which existed after the 1st cent. a.d.”. Günther Baumbach, “γραμματεὺς,” in *EDNT*, ed. H.R. Balz and G. Schneider (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990-1993), 259. Cf. Fitzmyer, *Luke I-IX*, 581, 676.

<sup>313</sup> Byrne makes a salient observation of Levi’s repentance by stating that “repentance is not a precondition for God’s acceptance...[but] something that a sense of God’s acceptance makes possible, joy-filled and transformative in human lives.” Byrne, *Hospitality*, 60.

but within the wider ancient world where commensality equalled spiritual oneness between parties.<sup>314</sup> And as such, by eating with “sinners” Jesus is also offering his kingdom to them.

In vv. 33-39,<sup>315</sup> the Pharisees’ question, which juxtaposed the fasting and austerity of John’s disciples with the feasting and revelry of Jesus’ disciples, comes as a response to Jesus’ reply to their first question concerning why he ate with sinners. Jesus responds with three brief parables which highlight: (1) The distance between Jesus’ kingdom message and the understanding of his contemporaries, (2) Jesus’ message of gospel acceptance cannot be reconciled to the older separatist piety and politics, and any attempt to do so would destroy both.

The narrative of Levi’s banquet suggests a continuation of Jesus’ mission to preach and teach the good news of the kingdom of God by calling people to repentance. Although the Isaiah enunciation of preaching good news to the poor is set as a mantle of Jesus’ prophetic messianic credentials (4:18-19), Jesus is shown to also preach good news to the rich, such as Levi.<sup>316</sup> Jesus’ mission here is not bound by a person’s economic status. Jesus extends the good news of the kingdom to Levi by calling him to follow and whether implied or not, Levi interprets this call as involving a renunciation of his economic activity. The scene then turns to Levi’s house where a large crowd of Levi’s contemporaries and friends come together for a meal in honour of Jesus. Levi’s house and banquet provide a context in which the message of Jesus can be proclaimed. So far in the narrative, Jesus has been described as being sent to “preach good news” (4:18), desiring to preach “good news” to multiple towns (4:43), teaching crowds the word of God (5:1-3), and teaching a crowd which included

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<sup>314</sup> Johnson, *Luke*, 99.

<sup>315</sup> Luke has conflated Mark’s two separate pericopes of Levi (Mk 2:13-17) and the question of fasting (Mk 2:18-22) into the one seamless event.

<sup>316</sup> As Fitzmeyer pointed out, Levi is a “rich Palestinian Jew”, and the “Lucan Jesus does not decline the invitation to attend [the banquet]”. Fitzmeyer, *Luke I-IX*, 591.

Pharisees and teachers of the law (5:17).<sup>317</sup> That he continues this pattern while at the house of Levi fits the contours of the Lukan narrative thus far. Furthermore, Jesus' response to his detractors is to state that he has come to call "sinners to repentance" (5:32), which indicates a present kerygmatic motivation among the banquet guests at Levi's house. Clearly then, Levi's domestic hospitality toward Jesus and the guests provide a location for Jesus' mission to extend and proceed. The fact that Levi invites his friends and associates alludes to his own mission activity as he brings others to hear the good news, that the messianic prophet has welcomed him. He uses his networks and his home to allow the mission of Jesus to reach more people. In this sense, Levi, through his home and his banquet, becomes a missionary through whom the mission of Jesus is extended.<sup>318</sup> And as such, Levi becomes a model to Luke's banquet communities—especially the rich—to do likewise.

The banquet at Levi's implies cooks and table service, however, Luke keeps them just out of view to highlight the pre-eminence of the mission of Jesus. Since we are defining one significant aspect of ministry as table service, those who gather food, prepare it, set the tables, serve the food, and clean up and set things in order, are absent in this narrative. This is not to suggest deliberate motivation or purpose by the Lukan author to exclude the service of such people, but suggests a motivation to focus on the pre-eminence of Jesus' mission.

In delving deeper into the meal scenes such as Levi's great banquet in which a large crowd (ὄχλος πολὺς) had gathered, the reality of ministry as humble service pulsates under the surface. Great banquets for large crowds take many hours, if not days, of preparation. Luke's audience know this, especially the women. And as such, perhaps these meal-scene pericopes are an attempt by Luke to encourage such service for the greater cause of the kingdom of God.

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<sup>317</sup> Luke uses the term νομοδιδάσκαλοι which is another way of saying νομικός "teachers of the law". He will use it again in Acts 5:34 to refer to Gamaliel. The only other use of the term in the NT is in 1 Tim 1:7.

<sup>318</sup> Fitzmeyer correctly suggests that the banquet in Levi's home is a "concrete expression of Levi's [following Jesus]". Fitzmyer, *Luke I-IX*, 591.

## **6. Dinner with Simon the Pharisee 7:36-50<sup>319</sup>**

That Jesus regularly dines with Pharisees in Luke's Gospel may come as somewhat of a surprise. They were powerful, wealthy, respected and certainly not marginalised or considered outcasts in any sense. The sense of surprise centres on our contemporary descriptions of Jesus' radical hospitality with sinners and outcasts, to which Pharisees do not naturally belong. I would argue, however, that Jesus' continued willingness to dine with Pharisees is also part of that radical hospitality, as well as part of his all-embracing mission. Within the customs of hospitality of the time, by eating with them Jesus is expressing acceptance of them, and they of him.

Luke 7:36-50 sits as the last pericope within the larger section of 7:1-50. Two miracle stories form the first section with the healing of the Centurion's servant in 7:1-10, and the raising of the widow's son at Nain 7:11-18. The middle section contains three linked units starting with an evaluation of Jesus' ministry in the light of John's message (18-23), a repositioning of John's ministry in the light of Jesus' message (24-28), and finally, an aligning of the message of Jesus and John and the lack of public response.<sup>320</sup> It would appear then that vv. 36-50 is an attempt by Luke to justify the statements of Jesus in vv. 29-35 regarding being a friend of sinners.

The previous unit of vv. 29-35 which involves the Pharisees and experts in the law rejecting God's purposes, is linked to this story by the dinner invitation in v. 36. That Jesus receives an invitation to dine at the house of a Pharisee highlights Luke's moderate treatment of the Pharisees in their relation to Jesus.<sup>321</sup> As has been noted, in terms of frequency of named dinner guests, Jesus eats with Pharisees more than any other group in Luke (Lk 7:36-50;

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<sup>319</sup> For an extensive redactional analysis of this passage, see Mullen, *Dining*, 79-99.

<sup>320</sup> Nolland sees Luke's concern here "is to portray Jesus' ministry as the eschatological visitation of God that complements and completes, but also takes up onto an entirely new level, what had been inaugurated by the ministry of John." Nolland, *Luke 1-9:20*, 313.

<sup>321</sup> Sanders believes Luke displays "anti-Pharisaism", but on evidence of the frequent meals Jesus has with them, I think this overstates the case. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 180. See also Nolland who adds that only "Luke tells us that Jesus on occasion dined by invitation with Pharisees". Nolland, *Luke 1-9:20*, 353.

11:37-54; 14:1-24). However, while initially the Pharisee may have some openness to Jesus and his message, it always ends on a sour note with Jesus being caught up in some scandal.

Whatever the type of meal, Jesus readily accepts the invitation and reclines with Simon and the other guests.<sup>322</sup> Simon's invitation would appear to portray that he believes Jesus has an acceptable level of purity, and thus he can dine with him in his home.<sup>323</sup> Jesus' interaction with Pharisees thus far in the Lukan narrative sees them coming from "every village of Galilee and from Judea and Jerusalem" to hear Jesus teach (5:17), where a subsequent controversy ensues concerning blasphemy and forgiving sins (5:21). In 5:30 the Pharisees complained "Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?", and then question Jesus about the poor fasting and praying practices of his disciples compared with their own disciples and those of John (5:33). In 6:1-11 two concurrent Sabbath episodes have, firstly, the Pharisees questioning Jesus over perceived unlawful Sabbath behaviour in picking and eating heads of grain, and secondly, watching Jesus closely looking for a reason to accuse him if he were to heal on the Sabbath. The unit ends with the Pharisees being furious and discussing "what they might do with Jesus," an obvious and foreboding threat. Finally, just prior to the story in 7:36-50 is Luke's description of the Pharisees "rejecting God's purpose for themselves, because they had not been baptized by John" (7:30).<sup>324</sup>

Thus, up until the invitation by Simon the Pharisee in 7:36, we find mostly a litany of hostility on behalf of the Pharisees in their relation to Jesus. If in fact Jesus claims in Luke "I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance", then why interact and dine with Pharisees? Such a question is not answered directly by Luke. Ironically, perhaps it is

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<sup>322</sup> Luke uses the Hellenistic descriptive terms *κατεκλιθη* and *κατάκειται* to simply describe a meal setting in which participants reclined on couches with their legs facing away from the table. It was not uncommon for Pharisees to host meals at lunchtime after morning Sabbath services.

<sup>323</sup> Green, *Luke*, 308.

<sup>324</sup> Moessner proposes that "The Pharisee's entertaining of Jesus at their meals does not manifest but rather stifles the Kingdom of God in their midst. These leaders thus produce a 'leaven' among the crowds which does not receive the journeying-guest Prophet, Lord of the Banquet." Moessner, *Lord of the Banquet*, 208.

Jesus' acceptance to dine with Simon the Pharisee that more radically displays his openness than his association with "sinners". In accepting this invitation by Simon and two further invitations by Pharisees (11:37-54; 14:1-24), Jesus shows a willingness to eat with anyone. While it is clear that Jesus will not bend to the request of Pharisees to not associate with "sinners" and toll-collectors, it is also the case that he assumes an on-going open and welcoming stance toward the Pharisees. In 13:3, for instance, some Pharisees came to Jesus to warn him that Herod was planning to kill him, which suggests that in Luke's Gospel the relationship between Jesus and the Pharisees was not hostile all the time.

The entry of the "sinful"<sup>325</sup> woman carrying an alabaster jar of perfume<sup>326</sup> in vv. 37-38 creates a sudden and dramatic turn in the narrative. Such a guest would not have been welcome to dine in such a setting on at least two fronts: being a sinner and a woman. Houses were open and accessible at the time,<sup>327</sup> but it is clear that the woman was not invited and had no legitimate claim to be present.<sup>328</sup>

The woman's culturally inappropriate and erotic actions of letting down her hair, weeping, anointing Jesus' feet and wiping them with her hair are placed in tenses which emphasise repeated and on-going expression rather than a brief series of one-off events. As a Pharisee, Simon's reaction is consonant with regulations in the Torah such as "if he touches human

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<sup>325</sup> The details of what type of "sinner" the woman was are not defined, however, Johnson says her sinfulness "was sufficiently public to be known by Jesus' host", and that "the indefinite relative pronoun *hētis* also suggests a translation rendered "the sort of woman in the city who was a sinner". Johnson, *Luke*, 127, n.37. Nolland agrees that the "dramatic impact of the woman's actions appears most strikingly if "sinner" is understood as a euphemism for "prostitute" or "courtesan." Nolland, *Luke 1-9:20*, 353. Blomberg offers a number of caveats before identifying her as a prostitute. Blomberg, *Contagious Holiness*, 132-33. Mullen creatively suggests the woman is not a prostitute, but rather, an example to female converts to Christianity who found participation with men at communal Eucharist meals uncomfortable. Mullen, *Dining*, 114. Marshall is certain that the woman is a prostitute and compares her hospitality of Jesus to that of Rahab (cf. Josh 2). Marshall, "Jesus and the Banquets", 325. Ambiguity thus remains on the detail of her sinfulness, but as Fitzmeyer notes, Luke (v. 37), Simon (v. 39), and Jesus (v. 47), all agree she was a "sinner". Fitzmeyer, *Luke I-IX*, 688-89.

<sup>326</sup> As Blomberg notes, the possession of such an ornament indicates the woman was wealthy or that she is making an enormous sacrifice. Blomberg, *Contagious Holiness*, 133.

<sup>327</sup> Ibid. Koenig suggests that "virtuous Jews were also known to open their houses to the needy on many other occasions... which explains why a "woman... who was a sinner" (Lk 7:36-38) could have gained access to a Pharisee's meal". Koenig, *New Testament Hospitality*, 16-17.

<sup>328</sup> Stuart L. Love, "Hellenistic Symposia Meals in Luke," in *Modelling Early Christianity: Social-Scientific Studies of the New Testament in its Context*, ed. Phillip F. Esler (London: Routledge, 1995), 206.

uncleanness—anything that would make him unclean—even though he is unaware of it, when he learns of it he will be guilty” (Lev 5:2).<sup>329</sup> Whether Simon thinks Jesus is actually a prophet with his thought “If this man were a prophet”, or whether Simon is merely adjudicating on public sentiment concerning Jesus is unclear; however, to Simon’s surprise, Jesus knows both who is touching him and Simon’s very thoughts.<sup>330</sup> Though up until this point no one in the narrative has uttered any words, Jesus now declares he has something to say to Simon and presents a short parable about two debtors and a moneylender. In so doing, Jesus usurps the role of host in assuming the right to direct the conversation pedagogically. Jesus asks which debtor would be more grateful to the money lender for cancelling<sup>331</sup> the debts (“love him more”)? Simon responds “I suppose the one who had the bigger debt cancelled” (v. 43). Jesus acknowledges that the two men had debts and needed to either pay them or be released from them and this accentuates the call to repentance that accompanied Jesus’ open table fellowship. The sticking point seems to be that the woman is aware of her great debts but Simon is oblivious to his smaller debt.<sup>332</sup> Both need gracious forgiveness from God to whom they are in debt, forgiveness that Jesus, as God’s agent, offers them.

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<sup>329</sup> Mullen incorrectly posits that Simon is not a true Pharisee, or that Luke may have confused Simon with the class of Greco-Roman patrons. His basis for the assumption is that no self-respecting Pharisee would have tolerated such a guest. Mullen, *Dining*, 108-09. But this is in fact the nub of the drama and conflict in this story: Simon is offended by the woman and by Jesus’ allowing her to touch him, a supposed prophet.

<sup>330</sup> In the Lukan infancy narrative, Simeon foretold that Jesus was “destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel...so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed (2:35). Luke shows on a number of occasions that Jesus is someone who not only responds to spoken words, but also to unspoken thoughts (cf. 5:22; 6:8; 9:47; 11:17).

<sup>331</sup> Johnson notes that Luke employs the term *χαρίζεσθαι* which has nuances of “graciously” and “by way of gift”. This would place the onus and gesture solely on the graciousness of the moneylender, not on anything the debtors did to secure release. Johnson, *Luke*, 127, n.42. Fitzmyer concurs with the nuance of “graciously”, but adds that it also carries a technical sense of sins or debts being remitted. Fitzmyer, *Luke I-IX*, 690. However, Nolland suggest that “the use of *χαρίζεσθαι* is probably a relatively colorless technical use for the remission of debts or sins”. Nolland, *Luke 1–9:20*, 356. Luke is the only gospel writer to use the term, here in 7:42-43 and just prior in 7:21 where Jesus “gave sight to many who were blind.” On the basis of its use in 7:21 it would appear Johnson and Fitzmyer are correct in suggesting the term is nuanced with a sense of graciousness by the bestower.

<sup>332</sup> See Mullen who believes that Simon’s hospitality was not the issue, but that he had lesser sins than the woman, so would naturally respond with less gratitude. Mullen, *Dining*, 117. This stretches the tenor of the narrative which sees Jesus assume the position of host and then he publicly scrutinises the actual host’s thoughts and behaviour by juxtaposing them with a woman “sinner”. The drama of the narrative clearly suggests this would have been embarrassing to Simon.

Jesus now turns to the woman, yet to address her directly, and crafts her into an extension of the parable in order to teach Simon, or more accurately, rebuke him (vv. 44-46).<sup>333</sup> Jesus now draws three comparisons between the woman's actions and Simon's which centre on the theme of hospitality: (1) Simon provided no water for Jesus' feet,<sup>334</sup> the woman wet them with her tears and wiped them with her hair; (2) Simon did not give Jesus a greeting kiss; but the woman has repeatedly kissed Jesus' feet; (3) Simon did not provide oil for Jesus' head; the woman poured expensive perfume on Jesus' feet.<sup>335</sup> Jesus uses these customary expressions of hospitality within a meal setting in which to draw the sharp distinction.

Considering the sustained hostility and abrasiveness of Pharisees to Jesus heretofore in Luke's Gospel, one would understand if he was presented as hostile from the outset. However, Luke presents Jesus as relaxed and in control of the impromptu situation—the consummate “host”. Secondly, Jesus focuses on a seemingly insignificant or inconsequential issue of rudimentary hospitality customs at a meal, rather than engage Simon on “weightier” theological issues that had already been raised by Pharisees such as blasphemy and who has the right to forgive sins (5:21); questions on fasting and praying (5:33); or doing what is lawful on the Sabbath (6:2, 7). The meal setting affords Jesus the opportunity to observe the hospitality of his host Simon closely and he does not like what he sees. Simon's religion is one of pretence and façade and has not the depth and authenticity to transform him into a gracious and courteous host. It is interesting that at the point of the apparent theologically mundane, hospitality customs, Jesus sharply criticises an upstanding

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<sup>333</sup> The form of the passage has a clever artistry about it in which Simon is the one to pass judgment in vv. 38-39 and at Jesus' invitation in vv. 40-42, and yet in vv. 44-47, Simon himself becomes the one judged.

<sup>334</sup> Cf. Gen 18:4; 24:32, and 1Sam 25:41 for hospitality expressed through foot-washing.

<sup>335</sup> The actions offered by the woman and neglected by Simon were not required by the law and Simon had not transgressed in omitting them. However, as Moessner highlights, in contrast to Simon, the woman “extends to Jesus the hospitality, the receiving due to the one before whom childlike repentance is the only proper response.” Moessner, *Lord of the Banquet*, 109.



and religiously devoted man.<sup>336</sup> In Luke, sharing a meal with Jesus becomes a cipher for salvation or judgement.

In v. 47 Jesus declares the woman's "many sins have been forgiven—for she loved much. But he who has been forgiven little loves little."<sup>337</sup> For the first time in the narrative, Jesus now directly addresses the woman by reiterating "Your sins are forgiven" (v. 48).<sup>338</sup>

In v. 49, the dinner guests enter into the narrative repeating the accusations of the Pharisees and lawyers in 5:21 about who has the right to forgive sins. The difference here is that the question is not in the negative as in 5:21. The answer to "Who is this who even forgives sins?" is left unanswered by both Luke and Jesus. It may well be an irony employed by Luke that the answer to this question is known by the nameless sinful woman, but not by the named and righteous Pharisee, Simon.

Finally in v. 50, Jesus commends the faith of the woman as that which has allowed salvation to enter her life.<sup>339</sup> The traditional Jewish farewell blessing "go in peace" echoes the role of

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<sup>336</sup> Koenig notes correctly that the "very structure of Luke's work witnesses to a conviction on his part that some deep link exists between the verbal content of God's good news and its historical embodiment in boundary situations involving guests and hosts". Koenig, *New Testament Hospitality*, 87.

<sup>337</sup> Some further comment on grammar is necessary as the entire theological direction of v. 47a rests on either one of two possibilities: the woman is forgiven *because/since* she loved much, or she loves much *because/since* she is forgiven. Nolland states it succinctly: "At stake is whether love is here the actual ground of forgiveness, or, alternatively, the way in which the actuality of forgiveness becomes transparent." Nolland, *Luke 1–9:20*, 358. There are sound arguments in favour of either reading; however, the evidence of the text favours the latter of the two options. Blomberg highlights the history of controversy surrounding this verse: "Despite centuries of debate among Catholic and Protestant interpreters...there is now widespread agreement among scholars of both communities that the causal clause, 'for she loved much', must modify the verb 'tell' rather than 'have been forgiven'...Jesus is not pronouncing God's forgiveness on the woman because of the love just poured out on him." Blomberg, *Contagious Holiness*, 135. But why would Luke allow any ambiguity to remain? That he does must at least leave the door open to the possibility that he is suggesting that her love of Jesus is not solely a response of her sins forgiven but also part of the process of her sins being forgiven. This then means that the hospitable actions of women toward Jesus can be interpreted as a means of divine affirmation. See also Johnson, *Luke*, 128, n. 47; Nolland, *Luke 1–9:20*, 358; and Byrne, *Hospitality*, 75.

<sup>338</sup> Johnson notes that Luke's use of the perfect passive means "Her sins 'have been forgiven by God.' Jesus declares what has been done *for* her." Johnson, *Luke*, 128, n. 47 (emphasis author's). Nolland is adamant that v. 48 "cannot be read as a fresh forgiveness of the woman, but it can and should be read as a confirmation of the woman's forgiveness, on the basis of Jesus' own authority". Nolland, *Luke 1–9:20*, 359.

<sup>339</sup> Luke links faith and salvation again in 8:48; 17:19; 18:42, and has already established a definition of the saviour as one who will "give his people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins" (1:77).

the Messiah foreshadowed in Zachariah's song in 1:79 as one who would "guide our feet into the path of peace." The unknown, uninvited sinful woman finds peace at Simon's dinner; we can only imagine peace was something that eluded Simon at the dinner table. What starts with a simple invitation to Jesus for a meal ends with Simon's theological foundations and understandings strewn across the dinner table.<sup>340</sup>

While Simon as host of this domestic hospitality is derelict in his obligations, the woman honours Jesus as host and ignores Simon. Thus, a reversal of roles occurs with Jesus usurping the authority and position of host that culturally belonged to Simon, relegating Simon's status to that of guest. The woman, who was not an invited guest, has her status lifted by Jesus, and in effect, becomes the host. The mission of Jesus is extended in the setting of a meal with Simon the Pharisee. However, this was not necessarily with the consent of Simon to have his house and dinner used as a means for the support and approval of Jesus' mission. This ambivalence of failing to cede his house to the mission of Jesus shows he is not a disciple. That the good news of the kingdom is proclaimed at Simon's house is clear from two contrasting realities. Firstly, Simon is rebuked and warned of his need to repent and be forgiven, and this echoes the preaching of John the Baptist earlier in the narrative (3:7-9), and also the repentance emphasised by Jesus directly.<sup>341</sup> In this sense, Simon is shamed and humiliated when Jesus uses a woman of inferior status to reprove Simon publicly. Secondly, an unnamed woman "sinner" has her sins forgiven, again echoing the good news preached by John (3:3), and now by Jesus (4:18, 43; 7:22). Luke has established earlier that one of the primary fruits of salvation is the forgiveness of sins (1:77), and Jesus as Saviour (2:11, 30; 3:6) shows that he is the harbinger of this fruit to sinners,

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<sup>340</sup> See Gowler who plausibly notes that here, as elsewhere with Jesus' interactions with Pharisees in Luke, the dialogue is presented as an honour/shame contest. Gowler, *Portraits*, 222.

<sup>341</sup> See for instance where Jesus pronounces the need for repentance in Luke: 5:32; 10:13; 11:32; 13:3, 5; 15:7, 10; 16:30; 17:3-4; 24:47. Fitzmyer posits that repentance and the forgiveness of sin are Luke's preferred ways of summarising the effects of the "Christ-event". Fitzmyer, *Luke I-IX*, 237-39, 459.

such as the “gate-crashing” women at Simon’s dinner party. And Marshall is right to point out the parallels of this pericope’s focus on Jesus’ feet<sup>342</sup> with Isaiah 52:7:

How beautiful on the mountains  
are the feet of those who bring good news,  
who proclaim peace,  
who bring good tidings,  
who proclaim salvation.

Immediately after this meal scene Jesus travels κηρύσσων καὶ εὐαγγελιζόμενος τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ (proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God). Clearly we are meant to see that it is the feet of Jesus, so prominent in 7:36-50, which are the bearers of the good news of salvation and peace, both of which the sinful woman receives at the table in Simon’s house.

Regarding ministry in this context, two things are clear. Firstly, Simon neglects service to Jesus’ needs and the essential basic requirements of first century hospitality conventions of providing water for dirty feet, a greeting kiss, and oil for the head. Secondly, the woman offers service to Jesus through washing his feet with her tears and her hair, kissing his feet, and anointing them with expensive perfume. Jesus thus contrasts the ministry of Simon with the woman and decrees Simon as falling short.<sup>343</sup> And just as this unnamed woman serves Jesus at table, it is the women in the early church who are carrying the ministry of hospitality through their cooking and table service. Luke’s audience may hear in this pericope that anyone, regardless of reputation, can offer hospitality and service in aiding the mission of Jesus. But as with the banquet at Levi’s, we are presented with a scene in which the service of those who undertook the menial and mundane work of a multitude of preparations for the meal is not explicitly acknowledged. The meal and domestic setting, however, suggest that Luke tacitly implies it to the banquet communities.

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<sup>342</sup> Marshall, “Jesus and the Banquets”, 325-26.

<sup>343</sup> For instances of how guests and hosts could violate the laws of hospitality, see Gowler, *Portraits*, 224. See also Green, *Luke*, 312-13.

## 7. At Mary and Martha's House 10:38-42

This concise unique Lukan pericope involves two sisters, Martha and Mary, both of whom are not mentioned before or after in Luke.<sup>344</sup> Martha assumes the role of host for Jesus and his disciples who were travelling with him.<sup>345</sup> It is clear from Luke's frequent usage of κώμη that villages are places where the mission of Jesus is enacted.<sup>346</sup> His arrival at Bethany no doubt continues this practice and his intention is to preach the good news there. This pericope falls within the large section of Luke's Gospel which is a travel narrative concerning his journey towards Jerusalem (9:51-19:44). Jesus and his disciples rely on the hospitality of householders such as Martha, a point already made by Jesus when he sent out the Twelve (9:1-6), and the 70[2] (10:1-12).

It is this itinerant and nomadic mission of Jesus that sees a significant amount of the Lukan narrative occur in the countryside. Luke at times uses the word πόλις (city) when he is actually describing villages, and this suggests that either (a) Luke is unfamiliar with Palestine, or (b) Luke is applying the term πόλις in a more technical sense gleaned from specific data such as the town/village being a tax collection point or market centre.<sup>347</sup>

Concerning the nature of village life in Palestine, there was little that was either idyllic or irenic due to a number of factors. Villages were subjugated by foreign rule or local elites and taxation for villagers could be as high as 50% of their crops. In addition to this they had

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<sup>344</sup> Green and Fitzmeyer correctly note that the history of the interpretation of this text as a presentation of the contemplative versus the action oriented life is ill-founded. Green, *Luke*, 433; Fitzmeyer, *Luke X-XXIV*, 892-93.

<sup>345</sup> Moessner believes that only Jesus entered the village and subsequently Martha's house. However, the movement of the narrative and the explicit statement by Luke, "As Jesus and his disciples were on their way", suggest that Luke intends them to be present in the pericope. Moessner, *Lord of the Banquet*, 144. Johnson observes in relation to the sister's hospitality "an itinerant mission depended on such support and safety." Johnson, *Luke*, 175.

<sup>346</sup> Jesus visits villages "proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God" (8:1b) and "teaching" (13:22). Jesus sends the disciples out to do the same, and they "went from village to village, preaching the gospel and healing people everywhere (9:6). And Jesus plans ahead before arriving at a Samaritan village by sending "messengers on ahead...to get things ready for him" (9:52).

<sup>347</sup> In Acts 8:25 Luke continues this theme of villages being centres of mission: "When they had testified and proclaimed the word of the Lord, Peter and John returned to Jerusalem, preaching the gospel in many Samaritan villages." For a fuller understanding of how Luke used and defined "city", see Richard L. Rohrbaugh, "The Pre-Industrial City in Luke-Acts: Urban Social Relations," in *The Social World of Luke-Acts: Models for Interpretation*, ed. Jerome H. Neyrey (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1991), 137-149.

tithe obligations. Villages were mostly based on kinship, with many consisting of a single family of origin.<sup>348</sup> Hospitality was not always extended to outsiders due to perceived threat to village interests and “betrayal of peasant family or village interests mean[t] ostracism or worse”.<sup>349</sup> Villagers had to be industrious and produced most of their own food needs through agriculture, could earn a daily wage working as labourers on large estates, and engaged in various crafts to both supplement income and barter.<sup>350</sup> Peasants in the villages lived constantly on edge of famine, and Oakman notes that “rents and taxations only strained this narrow margin...[and] many peasants lived under constant anxiety over subsistence.”<sup>351</sup> Such economic and social pressures often preceded unrest and violence which could manifest in war, extortion, forcibly taking rent, fraud, robbery, imprisonment, police actions, forced labour, and disputes between villages.<sup>352</sup> This social reality of first century Palestine leads Oakman to the startling declaration that “Most villagers in Jesus’ rural environment would have been stingy, as are most peasants under the pressure of subsistence and village envy.”<sup>353</sup> Oakman’s claim of village “stinginess” is tenable, though unverifiable and may involve unnecessary projections from a Western capitalist economic milieu which is much more attuned to cost benefit analyses. For one thing, his claim fails to take into account the wider cultural obligations concerning hospitality as described in Chapter 1. Moreover, nowhere in Luke’s Gospel is Jesus or his disciples refused hospitality for reasons of scarcity or “stinginess”.<sup>354</sup> Nevertheless, in this village at least, Jesus and his entourage are welcomed by Martha.

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<sup>348</sup> Douglas E. Oakman, “The Countryside in Luke-Acts,” in *The Social World of Luke-Acts: Models for Interpretation*, ed. Jerome H. Neyrey (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1991), 166.

<sup>349</sup> Ibid.

<sup>350</sup> Ibid., 166-7.

<sup>351</sup> Ibid., 167.

<sup>352</sup> Ibid., 168.

<sup>353</sup> Ibid., 175.

<sup>354</sup> Jesus is rejected in Nazareth when he initiates a sharp conflict with the synagogue congregation (4:14-30), after delivering the Gadarene demoniac, the people ask Jesus and his disciples to leave due to their fear (8:37), and the Samaritans reject Jesus because he is on his way to Jerusalem (9:53). In none of these cases is food or hospitality remotely an issue in the rejection. However, even though refusal of hospitality to the disciples of Jesus in their mission is a precursor to judgement, this has more to do with not listening to the message rather than the provision of food and lodging. (9:5; 10:10-12). The issue of hospitality here seems to

Martha's sister Mary is located at the feet of Jesus (v. 39), just as the unnamed women of 7:36-50 had been, and assumes the position of a disciple listening to his word (λόγος).<sup>355</sup> Women such as Mary and Martha would normally be under the protection of their father or respective husbands, neither of which is mentioned in the scene, which would suggest that Mary and Martha are unmarried and are thus providing resources for Jesus and the disciples from their own means.<sup>356</sup>

Mary's silence is interpreted by some feminist interpreters as Luke portraying her in a negative light.<sup>357</sup> Mary is not described as silent, however, but as listening, and nor does the text imply that it would have been wrong for her to speak.<sup>358</sup> The silence of Mary is not forced or imposed by Jesus and is contrasted in the text by the free and robust speech of Martha who in v. 40 essentially issues a command to Jesus: "Tell her to help me!". Martha

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be central for the way the Lukan Jesus perceives the divine authority that undergirds those he sends on mission: "He who listens to you listens to me; he who rejects you rejects me; but he who rejects me rejects him who sent me." (10:16) It is difficult to imagine the Lukan Jesus pronouncing divine judgement on poor peasants who had no food to share. The hospitality in this context is a welcoming of the message and person of Jesus. Thus by "welcoming Jesus", suggests Dowling, "Martha demonstrates the appropriate response to the agent of the divine visitation." Elizabeth V. Dowling, *Taking Away the Pound: Women, Theology and the Parable of the Pounds in the Gospel of Luke* (London: T & T Clark, 2007), 161.

<sup>355</sup> Whether or not women in the first century were permitted to study the law or be aligned to a Rabbi is debated, but it was at least irregular and unusual for a Rabbi to have female disciples. Green, *Luke*, 435. In the wider society the honour of a female was directed toward the domestic sphere, dealing with things such as "kitchen utensils, drawing water, spinning and sewing, bread baking, or sweeping out the house. All these female spaces and things are centripetal to the family dwelling." Malina and Neyrey, "*The Social World*," 43.

<sup>356</sup> Luke is given to presenting women in relation to their husbands: Elizabeth (1:5), Mary (1:27) Herodias (3:19), and Joanna (8:3). This pattern continues in Acts with Sapphira (5:1), Priscilla (18:2), Drusilla (24:24) and Bernice (25:13). Moreover, as is the case in 10:38-42, Luke repeatedly locates women within the domestic space (1:24, 40-43; 4:38-39, 15:8-10).

<sup>357</sup> Citing an argument by Schüssler Fiorenza, Dowling suggests that this text "diminishes the leadership role of women, encouraging women to listen but not preach. While Mary is portrayed as a disciple of Jesus, she is not a minister of the Word." Dowling also suggests regarding Mary and Martha that "The affirmation of the silent woman and the correction of the woman who speaks in this pericope continues [Luke's] rhetoric regarding women's speech. Dowling, *Taking Away the Pound*, 165. See, however, Nolland who counters that Schüssler Fiorenza is not "convincing in her claim that the account is designed to restrict women's ministry and authority, and in particular to silence women leaders of house churches." John Nolland, *Luke 9:21-18:34*, vol. 35B, WBC (Dallas: Word, 1993), 602. See also Karris who convincingly proposes that both women are portrayed as good. Karris, *Eating*, 88. For a persuasive argument concerning Luke's positive portrayal of women in Luke-Acts, see Ben Witherington, *Women in the Earliest Churches* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 128-157. See also Alarndson, who offers a convincing thesis for Luke's high regard for women, and elaborates on women and class status in the Roman Empire. James M. Arlandson, *Women, Class, and Society in Early Christianity: Models from Luke-Acts* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1997), 14-52.

<sup>358</sup> Nolland is firm in his rebuttal stating "Schüssler Fiorenza has totally missed the direction of the Lukan development with her stress on the restriction to silence of Mary." Nolland, *Luke 9:21-18:34*, 603.

is presented as a woman who speaks to, or rather commands, Jesus, and is not silenced. While this is not an attempt to dismiss feminist critique of Luke's attitudes to women, nor to deny that such gender tensions existed within the early church, it serves to establish only that 10:38-42 does not provide material for impugning Luke's attitude to women as negative. For while Mary appears silent, and women in Luke are sometimes corrected when they speak, this is not a robust argument for Mary being negatively depicted. Men are also silenced and corrected by Jesus in Luke—even more so than women. For instance, Zechariah is forcibly silenced by the angel (1:20), while Mary the mother of Jesus speaks freely with no imposition of silence (1:26-38); the Pharisees and teachers of the law are silenced by Jesus' forceful question about the lawful nature of healing on the Sabbath (14:4); spies sent by the lawyers and chief priests to ensnare Jesus are astonished into silence by Jesus' shrewd response to their trap (20:26). In all three cases the silence is negative and humiliating, while the implied silence of Mary in 10:39 is neutral. And more so than women, in Luke's Gospel the Pharisees and teachers of the law/lawyers often find themselves chastised by Jesus (cf. 5:22-24; 6:3-5; 7:44-47; 11:39-54; 13:15-16; 16:14-15).<sup>359</sup> And if Luke has a message to send women "ministers", then why does Jesus accept the *δηκόνει* of Simon Peter's mother-in-law (4:39), praise the table service of the sinful woman in 7:36-50, and allow women to *δηκόνου* the mission and ministry (8:3)?

Feminist interpretation of the text draws attention to the nature of Martha's serving; was it general domestic duties of preparing a meal or does *διακονία* have a more technical use related to leadership and ministry in the Christian community?<sup>360</sup> While these issues were present in the early Christian communities, it would appear a distortion of the Lukan

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<sup>359</sup> Mullen saliently notes that 21<sup>st</sup> century Western sensitivities about gender equality would be a world that Luke and his contemporaries could not have conceived of. Mullen, *Dining*, 116.

<sup>360</sup> Some of this analysis seems forced and places too much interpretive weight upon this domestic setting, briefly described as it is. Byrne suggests that it is unlikely that "Luke's main point here is to say something—positive or negative—about the status of women." Byrne, *Hospitality*, 102. See also Green's warning of projecting modern notions of egalitarianism, ontology, and predispositions onto first century situations. Green, *Luke*, 335-36, n.142.

narrative here to place an argument about women in ministry in this household setting where Jesus and his disciples have been welcomed.<sup>361</sup> Moreover, Luke is not tacit in his repeated portrayal of the Pharisees' hostility to Jesus and their constantly being upstaged by him. Surely if Luke was seeking to restrict women's leadership in the early church he would not have veiled it obliquely in this short pericope. The plainer and preferred sense here is that Martha, as a host who welcomes Jesus into her house, is preparing food for them to eat. And while no actual meal is described, Martha's preparations point in the direction of food preparation.<sup>362</sup> In this sense then, it would appear that food preparation is getting in the way of Jesus' mission, and thus Martha is exhorted to reprioritise. It is not the preparation of the meal that Martha is corrected for, but the placing of the meal at the centre of attention and trying to take a disciple away from learning at the feet of the master.<sup>363</sup> But in another sense leadership and ministry are implied, for as I have been arguing, ministry for Luke is in fact largely exemplified by table-service. But in this pericope Martha, and consequently women in the church, are not being "put in their place", but having their valued ministry roles more clearly defined as secondary to the primary mission of Jesus' word.

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<sup>361</sup> Dowling, 162-63, suggests that *διακονία* does in fact refer to ecclesial leadership and, directly citing Barbara Reid, Dowling agrees that Martha is "being pulled away from her diaconal ministry by those who disapprove of women's involvement in such ministry." The wider argument of women and ministry aside, taking our cue from Luke we see that *διακονία* is used in Luke (as a verb): when Simon's Mother-in-law is healed by Jesus and gets up to "wait on them" (4:39); the reward for the servant's watchfulness is the master serving them at the table (12:35-38); a servant who waits on the master while he eats and drinks (17:7-9); and the nature of greatness with specific reference to serving at table (22:26-7); The original Greek usage of the word does in fact refer to "waiting on tables". While it is true that Luke also uses *διακονία* to refer to ministry and office holders, this is almost exclusively in Acts and is never obscured in reference to whether the implication is ministry as ecclesial leadership, waiting on tables, or caring for the poor. Thus, we must reject Dowling's assertion and interpret this verse to refer to Martha's food preparations. However, that Luke frequently uses *διακονία* in relation to women indicates he *values* this ministry they perform. See Finger, for instance, who argues on the basis of Acts 6:1-2 that *διακονία* undertaken by women as table service was something highly valued and esteemed. Finger, *Of Widows*, 251-275.

<sup>362</sup> Cf. Fitzmyer, *Luke X-XXIV*, 892.

<sup>363</sup> Nolland affirms this by stating "Presumably one must at times prepare food, but such concerns should never be allowed to compete with the hearing of the word of God. It may be the urgency lent by the eschatological presence of the kingdom of God". Nolland, *Luke 9:21-18:34*, 605.



At the end of the narrative, Jesus responds to Martha's command in vv. 41-42<sup>364</sup> by acknowledging that her worry is unnecessary and that Mary's choice to neglect domestic duties in favour of being an attentive disciple of Jesus is acceptable.<sup>365</sup> Furthermore, as has been noted, in patriarchal societies such as Luke's, women tend to appear in androcentric texts due to two factors: they are a problem or they are exceptional.<sup>366</sup> It would be advantageous to draw a wider picture of women in the first century to help put this pericope in context.

### 7.1. Women and Meals

As with much of history, in the first century world the practicalities of hospitality such as purchasing and preparing food, cooking, serving meals, and cleaning up fell to women.<sup>367</sup> In general, however, we can ascertain that in Greco-Roman times women were not allowed to vote nor hold elected offices, but were mainly limited to, but influential in, the domestic sphere.<sup>368</sup> And though there were gains and instances of equality across gender lines, it appears for the most part women had to accommodate a pervasive sense of shame that men did not.<sup>369</sup> And while it is true to say that all women were subjugated under men, some

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<sup>364</sup> V.42 has some textual issues which could translate Jesus' response to Martha as being (a) "only one thing is needed/necessary" or (b) "few things are needed/necessary-or only one. The general consensus is that the preferred reading is "one thing", while "few things" is a later scribal insertion. For detail on the textual issues see Fitzmyer, *Luke X-XXIV*, 894.

<sup>365</sup> Jesus extends this prioritising further in 12:22-23 by stating "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; or about your body, what you will wear. Life is more than food, and the body more than clothes", and in 12:29 "And do not set your heart on what you will eat or drink; do not worry about it". The first priority in domestic affairs is established by Jesus exhortation in 12:31: "But seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well". As Johnson has observed, "Jesus refers rather to the essential note of hospitality which is to pay attention to the guest; only that is necessary; the rest is optional." Johnson, *Luke*, 174.

<sup>366</sup> Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: a Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (New York: Crossroad, 1984), 44.

<sup>367</sup> In discussing women in Greco-Roman times we need to distinguish between the various classes of women such as the upper class of matrons and elites, secondly, concubines, prostitutes and companions, and finally, slaves and the poorer classes. Moreover, there were differences in regions such as that between Athenian and Spartan women. On these issues see Witherington, *Women*, 5-23.

<sup>368</sup> Osiek, MacDonald, and Tulloch, *A Woman's Place*, 199.

<sup>369</sup> Arlandson, *Women*, 156.

women, especially the slaves and the poor, were also subjugated under higher socially placed women.<sup>370</sup>

Bonnie Thurston has noted that women in Hebrew society were treated in many of the same ways as in the wider ancient Near East. Notably, the domestic sphere was the woman's place, the father had total authority over her until twelve and a half, the duties of a wife were bound to the domestic sphere and her husband was essentially her master. Moreover, demarcations were present within the Temple area that excluded women, and women were not permitted as students of the Torah.<sup>371</sup> A woman's testimony was not permitted in a religious court and they carried an inferior status along with children and slaves. Around 90 percent of women in biblical times in Palestine lived in villages where the family operated as both a social and economic unit. Within this family household, a woman's work involved clothes-making, food preparation and preserving, and care of domestic animals.<sup>372</sup> Even so, women were not second-class citizens within the various Judaisms, with some being financial patrons of synagogues, synagogue heads and elders, and as we saw in Ch. 1, the Therapeutae allowed women to interpret Scripture.<sup>373</sup> There was, however, a wider cultural shift that was occurring in the late Republican and early imperial times which saw women's roles and rights increasing in general and their acceptance at public meals in particular.

The understanding that the domestic sphere was the domain of woman was so ubiquitous in NT times, it hardly rates a mention in the NT. Women, however, are portrayed as patrons in the NT by opening their homes for mission, as can be seen with Martha and Mary (Lk 10:38-42), Mary (Acts 12:12), Chloe (1 Cor 1:3), Nympha (Col 4:15), and Lydia (Acts

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<sup>370</sup> Ibid.

<sup>371</sup> Bonnie Thurston, *Women in the New Testament: Questions and Commentary* (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1998), 15.

<sup>372</sup> Ibid., 15-16.

<sup>373</sup> Ibid., 17-18.

16:14-15).<sup>374</sup> In 1 Tim 5:3-16, the writer issues instruction on the care of widows and notes the exemplary widow as one who is “well known for her good deeds, such as bringing up children, showing hospitality, washing the feet of the saints, helping those in trouble and devoting herself to all kinds of good deeds” (v. 10). Furthermore, younger widows are counselled to “marry, to have children, to manage their homes and to give the enemy no opportunity for slander” (v. 14). While these injunctions would disturb modern sensibilities, they reflect the universal practice of the day that the domestic sphere was managed by women, and that beyond this sphere women had few rights that men enjoyed.

Corley, however, suggests that “the inclusion of women in Christian meals would have been noteworthy but not unique.”<sup>375</sup> Regarding meal etiquette and Jewish women, Corley shows that some Hellenistic writings that accuse Jewish women of being promiscuous, suggest that they dined with their husbands. Later sources, however, suggest that Jewish women, like their Greco-Roman counterparts, were excluded from meals altogether. Jewish women were present at the Passover Seder, but were not generally permitted to be involved in the actual liturgy. Some sources suggest that it was preferable that women remained quiet in such settings. Even so, Corley states that we don’t know “just how strictly ancient Jewish communities adhered to this prohibition, particularly in the early part of the first century.”<sup>376</sup> Corley concludes that “Judaism is undoubtedly one of the religious and philosophical groups that allowed women to participate in public meals with men.”<sup>377</sup>

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<sup>374</sup> Osiek and Balch, *Families*, 157-59; 214.

<sup>375</sup> Corley, *Private Women*, 24. Corley has elsewhere proposed that Jesus’ egalitarianism “did not include the concerns for gender inequity”, and that the role of women in the ministry of Jesus was reflective of the wider Mediterranean world, rather than a result of Jesus proclaiming “a gender-equal vision of the Kingdom of God”. Kathleen E. Corley, *Women and the Historical Jesus: Feminist Myths of Christian Origins* (Santa Rosa: Polebridge Press, 2002), 144. See also Thurston, who notes that of material unique to Luke, about one-third is directly related to women. This may suggest that Luke’s Hellenistic background in which Greek and Roman women experienced less legal and social restraints, and the possibility of being influenced by Roman Law, may account for the large number of women he portrays. Thurston, *Women*, 101.

<sup>376</sup> Corley, *Private Women*, 70.

<sup>377</sup> *Ibid.*, 75.

Concerning women at meals, Corley believes that Luke's Gospel reflects an affinity with the culture and practice of Greco-Roman tradition because they are presented in traditional and submissive roles.<sup>378</sup> Secondly, women converts are endorsed by Luke, but Corley maintains he nonetheless restricts their behaviour in alignment with Greco-Roman mores.<sup>379</sup> Thirdly, the earliest converts to Christianity included women, and thus the slander against Jesus by his detractors for including "tax-collectors and sinners" echoes Greco-Roman slander pertaining to those who dine with "promiscuous" women.<sup>380</sup> Fourthly, controversy over Christian texts pertaining to our understanding of women's roles are not particular to the NT, rather, these issues were part of the wider Greco-Roman social controversies. Fifthly, both Hellenistic Judaism and early Christian groups shared a convivial inclusivity concerning the welcoming of women to table fellowship. Thus Corley believes that the "motivation toward convivial egalitarianism among both Jews and Christians and the conservative resurgence that emphasized ideal women's roles are neither specifically Jewish nor Christian, but Greco-Roman."<sup>381</sup> This conclusion seems somewhat hasty as it would be difficult to ascertain to what extent the early church's attitudes to women were influenced by the memory of Jesus or by wider cultural shifts. In fact, it is precisely because of the prominence of food and hospitality in the mission and ministry of Jesus in Luke, that women would have been afforded roles of leadership and influence they might not otherwise had the opportunity to express.<sup>382</sup> Because women had authority and influence in the household sphere, they were thus at the centre of the mission and ministry of Jesus and the early church.<sup>383</sup> Indeed, much of the suspicion of Christian groups on the part of pagan

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<sup>378</sup> Ibid., 109.

<sup>379</sup> Ibid., 184.

<sup>380</sup> Ibid.

<sup>381</sup> Ibid., 185.

<sup>382</sup> This is not to suggest that women's roles in the early church were limited to table service, for Luke presents Priscilla as teaching the evangelist Apollos "the way of God" (Acts 18:24-26), while Philip the evangelist's four daughters prophesy (Acts 21:3).

<sup>383</sup> Margaret Y. MacDonald, *Early Christian Women and Pagan Opinion: The Power of the Hysterical Woman* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 30-1.

critics centred on the fact that they met in the female sphere.<sup>384</sup> We must therefore agree with Osiek et al who observed that “to step into a Christian house church was to step into women’s world.”<sup>385</sup>

Returning to Mary and Martha, we see that traditional roles and even the kinship of sisters are subjugated under the aegis of Jesus’ mission. Martha’s reasonable and culturally appropriate claim as host to have her younger sister assist her in the domestic duties is circumvented by a new order enunciated by Jesus. As he has done before, Jesus usurps the role of host in this household. Jesus has already announced in Luke that traditional kinship bonds must be re-evaluated in light of how one responds to him: “My mother and brothers are those who hear God’s word and put it into practice” (8:21). Mary’s traditional domestic role and her kinship obligation to her sister Martha are thus redefined by Jesus’ response to Martha for she chooses to “hear God’s word”. This pericope thus foreshadows a later saying of the Lukan Jesus:

Do you think I came to bring peace on earth? No, I tell you, but division. From now on there will be five in one family divided against each other, three against two and two against three. They will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law (12:51-53).

And again in 14:26-27, “If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters—yes, even his own life—he cannot be my disciple. And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple”. Therefore the threat to participation and fellowship is real in this scene. The relationship between sisters is potentially threatened by this new ordering of relational priority introduced by Jesus.<sup>386</sup>

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<sup>384</sup> Ibid., 254.

<sup>385</sup> Osiek, MacDonald, and Tulloch, *A Woman’s Place*, 163.

<sup>386</sup> On this point of relinquishing family in order to be a disciple of Jesus, see Borgman, *The Way*, 186-202.

In summary, Jesus and his disciples are travelling on mission and preaching and teaching in towns and villages, when they are offered hospitality (food and lodging) by Martha. While food and hospitality in this instance appear to be side-lined by Jesus, this is actually a matter of correct priorities rather than a rejection of the role of hospitality in his mission. It is still the case that the mission of Jesus is aided by food and hospitality, for surely it would be unlikely for them to be invited into Martha's home and remain unfed.<sup>387</sup> But nonetheless an important caveat is emphasised by Luke here, and that is that while hospitality plays a heightened and pivotal role in the mission of Jesus, it must not be allowed to usurp that mission. Luke prioritises the word of Jesus/God over and above Martha's διακονία.<sup>388</sup> Though we have no occurrence of repentance, the forgiving of sins, or good news being proclaimed at Martha's house, Jesus is no doubt using the domestic setting in order to teach disciples. Here no distinction is made to the more formal setting of the synagogue<sup>389</sup> where Jesus teaches (4:16,33; 6:6; 13:10) and the home of Martha. Therefore, while the hospitality offered by Martha affords an opportunity for the mission of Jesus to be extended through his teaching, it is clear that the preparation of the meal and its attendant duties can become a liability to his mission when they are placed over and above that mission.

The issue of ministry is front and centre in this story, especially with the use of διακονίαν to describe Martha's work. It has been established that while concerns about the role of women

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<sup>387</sup> Moessner highlights an important Lukan priority that sees hospitality as useful, even essential, to the mission of Jesus, but also that it is concurrently subjugated under that mission. Moessner suggests that Martha's service is a hindrance due to her failure to acknowledge and submit to the authority of Jesus, thus "to the extent that preparations for a meal stifle the life-giving words of Jesus, to the same degree the meal itself can no longer manifest the saving revelation of this life-giving presence." Moessner, *Lord of the Banquet*, 144.

<sup>388</sup> This happens here with Martha and also in Acts 6:2 in relation to food distribution where the Twelve declare, "It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables."

<sup>389</sup> In Luke's Gospel, Jesus uses synagogues as a location for teaching and preaching (4:15, 16, 44; 6:6; 13:10), and for healing (4:33; 6:6-10; 13:10-13). But they are also places of opposition and antagonism to Jesus (4:28; 6:7, 11; 13:14, 17a), and Jesus warns that his followers will be brought before synagogues to be put on trial (12:11; 21:12). Acts follows a similar vein where Paul and his companions regularly visited synagogues to teach and preach about Jesus (Acts 9:20; 13:5, 14-15; 14:1; 17:1-2, 10, 17; 18:4; 18:26; 19:8), but the followers of Jesus also experience persecution in synagogues (6:9; 9:2; 22:19; 26:11). For evidence pointing to synagogues as designated buildings in the first century, see Witherington, *Acts of the Apostles*, 255-57. For accounts of archaeological discoveries of pre-70 CE synagogues, see Charlesworth, *Jesus within Judaism*, 108-09.

in the early church are real, this text is unlikely to be a subversive attempt by Luke to assert a patriarchal order, but rather, a general description of domestic work as ministry. But in the one instance where we have a brief description of someone undertaking domestic tasks of food preparation, the response by Jesus to their request for help is treated unfavourably. By contrast, Mary, who assumes the position of a disciple and neglects domestic duties, is commended by Jesus. While there is a wealth of interpretive possibilities in this rather brief Lukan pericope, the plain sense appears that hospitality must be subservient to the mission and ministry of Jesus. Both Mary and Martha seek to serve Jesus; Mary by listening attentively to the Rabbi Jesus, and Martha by providing food and hospitality. However, in this instance, Jesus forbids the domestic duties of providing hospitality to curtail and encroach upon his mission to teach disciples. Domestic “mundane” service is the fuel beneath the hospitality that supports the mission and ministry of Jesus; however, it must remain subjugated to that mission. We will return to this theme of mundane service in Ch. 3, drawing out the sacramental nature of it.

## **8. Jesus eating with Pharisees 11:37-54**

This is the second of three occasions in which Jesus dines with a Pharisee. The unnamed Pharisee invites Jesus to eat with him after hearing Jesus speak. While no mention of an actual house occurs, the fact that that Luke describes Jesus going “in” and “reclining at table” indicates that the Pharisees’ house is the location.

The Pharisee is surprised<sup>390</sup> by Jesus’ failure to wash<sup>391</sup> before eating, as it was a normal practice for Jews from the Second Temple period to wash before meals, as well as before

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<sup>390</sup> The word ἐθαύμασεν is more akin to being astonished or amazed rather than the NIV translation “surprised”.

<sup>391</sup> Samuel Rosenblatt has noted that in neglecting to wash his hands Jesus did no more than what many “untutored” and “common” people did at the time. He then asks “Why should the identical conduct on the part of Jesus and his followers have been more provoking and led to more drastic reaction on the part of

Torah study and prayer.<sup>392</sup> In fact, the Mishnah has a lengthy section entitled Yadayim (“hands”) dealing specifically with how one is to wash his/her hands before eating. Archaeological evidence reveals that Synagogues in the Second-Temple era had wash basins connected to them as well as some having *miqva’ot* (ritual baths), and these items were present at Jewish burial sites also.<sup>393</sup> The text uses ἐβαπτίσθη which may have full immersion in focus. There is no indication in the narrative that the host Pharisee said anything to Jesus regarding washing, but rather that Jesus interpreted a quizzical look as being the basis for his rather strong response. Jesus is not long reclined at table when he issues four strident criticisms regarding the hypocrisy and abject failure of the Pharisees in their attempted devotion to God (11:39-44).

Artfully, Jesus’ first criticism of the Pharisees deflects any criticism aimed at him about hand washing, by exposing the folly of having an outwardly clean dish while being inwardly “unclean” (vv. 39-42).<sup>394</sup> Jesus extends the image of the dish by exhorting the Pharisees to “give for alms those things that are within; and see, everything will be clean for you” (v. 41 NRSV). The further three denunciations of Jesus’ monologue is obviously offensive to the Pharisees, but also to the teachers of the law with one in particular protesting that Jesus’ remarks are ὑβρίζεις (offensive).<sup>395</sup> The lawyer calls Jesus διδάσκαλε (cf. 7:40) which may

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the Pharisees?”. Samuel Rosenblatt, “The Crucifixion of Jesus from the Standpoint of Pharisaic Law,” *JBL* 75, no. 4 (1956): 317.

<sup>392</sup> John C. Poirier, “Purity beyond the Temple in the Second Temple Era,” *JBL* 122, no. 2 (2003): 251. See, however, Mullen who notes that the Mishnah (*m. Parah* 11:5) states that food is not defiled by unwashed hands. Mullen, *Dining*, 68. See also Sanders who notes the veracity of the practice of hand washing requirements, but states it was not a biblical injunction. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 185-86.

<sup>393</sup> Poirier cites the work of Regev to show that such hand washing before meals always contained a “religious perception”. He also argues that purity laws at the time were not solely temple-oriented and were embraced by a wider cross-section of Jewish people. Poirier cites Regev as stating “non-priestly purity was quite common, and was not restricted to local practice, social class, religious group, or halakhic school.” Poirier, “*Purity beyond the Temple*,” 257-258.

<sup>394</sup> See Christopher Hays who states that: “Ironically, the fastidious Pharisaic attention to external purity avails for nothing, since they are already inwardly profane. No amount of washing will purify them.” Christopher Hays, “Beyond Mint and Rue: The Implications of Luke’s Interpretive Controversies for Modern Consumerism,” *Political Theology* 11, no. 3 (2010): 385.

<sup>395</sup> The word means to mistreat, insult and abuse, and carries notions of libel. In 18:32, Luke uses the same word to describe Jesus’ upcoming arrest: “They will mock him, insult him (ὕβρισθήσεται), spit on him, flog him and kill him”. By way of observation, Brigid Frein notes that in relation to his main source of Mark’s gospel, Luke “displays even more psychological insight into the character’s feelings and motivations...[and]



indicate at least some level of respect.<sup>396</sup> However, like the Pharisees, the lawyers are not spared and incur three severe denunciations by Jesus. While the content of Jesus' invective is not the present focus in dealing with this hospitality event, it is clear that Jesus again usurps the role of host and is represented by Luke as fearless and authoritative in the face of the Jewish leaders. If there were any doubt in the narrative thus far about the tension between Jesus and these two groups of Jewish leaders, such doubt is removed by the forceful encounter initiated by Jesus.<sup>397</sup> Though, this does not equate with outright rejection by either party as we shall see shortly.

At the end of the meal the offensiveness of Jesus' remarks not surprisingly elicit a heated and fierce response by the other dinner guests (11:53-54). These remarks situated as they are within a wider cultural milieu that embraced specific codes concerning hospitality, must have been shocking to initial hearers.<sup>398</sup> An initial reading of the narrative leads to the conclusion that Jesus' response seems excessive and heavy-handed, and the host never utters a single word. Is Jesus vituperative speech justified regarding hand washing? We need to suspend modern sensibilities concerning such conflict by noting that open conflict was more acceptable and usual in the Mediterranean world than we might be comfortable with.<sup>399</sup> That being said, there can be no doubt that what occurs in this meal setting is Jesus taking the position of host and delivering a severe and stinging rebuke to the Jewish leaders, and further probing is required into the notion of "rebuking" in Israelite history.

In the Hebrew Bible, especially Psalms, God's rebuke is something to be feared greatly for its power (cf. Ps 39:11; 76:6; 80:16; 104:7; 106:9). However, for the righteous or the wise,

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also often retells events found in Mark's account in ways that provide more insight into the characters' emotional states." Frein, "*Genre*," 8.

<sup>396</sup> Nolland agrees and states that "the address as teacher marks Jesus as in some sense part of their kind." Nolland, *Luke 9:21-18:34*, 671. See also Fitzmyer who highlights that διδάσκαλος was a term of reverence in Palestine. Fitzmyer, *Luke I-IX*, 690.

<sup>397</sup> Hays correctly draws attention to the prophetic nature of Jesus' encounter at the home of the Pharisee. Hays, "*Beyond Mint*," 388.

<sup>398</sup> Green, *Luke*, 468.

<sup>399</sup> Malina and Neyrey, "*The Social World*," 98.

the notion of a righteous rebuke, whether from God or a person, is welcomed as a blessing. Thus David can say: “Let a righteous man...rebuke me—it is oil on my head (Ps 141:5). The wise are continually exhorted to embrace rebuke: “My son, do not despise the LORD’s<sup>400</sup> discipline and do not resent his rebuke because the LORD disciplines those he loves, as a father the son he delights in” (Prov 3:11; cf. Prov 9:8; 15:31; 17:10; 19:25; 25:12; 28:23). And ultimately it is wisdom, herself, who pleads with the people to heed her rebuke (Prov 1:20-30), for she will “laugh at your disaster” and “mock when calamity overtakes you” (Prov 1:26) for ignoring her rebuke.<sup>401</sup>

This history of the blessing of rebuke that leads to wisdom places this meal scene into wider context of how Jesus is being presented in Luke’s Gospel. Luke describes John the Baptist as one who will “turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous” (1:17), and the young Jesus is described as being filled with wisdom (2:40), and growing in wisdom (2:52). In Luke 7:35, Jesus responds to his detractors about the legitimacy of his mission and ministry by stating “wisdom is proved right by all her children”, and condemnation awaits his contemporaries who reject him, though his wisdom exceeds Solomon’s (11:31). At the present meal, Jesus refers to the sending of prophets as being initiated by the wisdom of God (11:49). Regarding the persecution of his followers, Jesus promises “words and wisdom that none of your adversaries will be able to resist or contradict” (21:15). The question is, does Luke attempt to present Jesus as Wisdom personified? This may be taking things one step too far, but it is

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<sup>400</sup> In v. 39, Luke prefaces the rebuke by calling Jesus *κυριος*. The significance in this context of the rebuke is highlighted by Fitzmyer: “In using *κυριος* of both Yahweh and Jesus in his writings Luke continues the sense of the title already being used in the early Christian community, which in some sense regarded Jesus as on a level with Yahweh.” Fitzmyer, *Luke I-IX*, 203.

<sup>401</sup> Dunn describes Wisdom in Judaism as “a way of speaking about God’s action in creation, revelation and redemption without actually speaking about God. Wisdom...denotes the *immanent* activity of God, without detracting from God’s wholly other transcendence”. Dunn, *Unity and Diversity*, 238 (emphasis author’s).

clear that Luke repeatedly describes Jesus with wisdom terminology.<sup>402</sup> What this may suggest is that Jesus was viewed by the early church, among other things, as the embodiment of the Wisdom who “calls aloud in the street, and raises her voice in the public squares” (Prov 1:20).<sup>403</sup> Therefore, interpreted within this Jewish framework, the “hostility” of Jesus at the Pharisee’s table may well be more akin to the righteous rebuke issued by Wisdom and therefore motivated by love.<sup>404</sup> That the Pharisees and teachers of the law rejected his rebuke highlights their foolishness and hardness of heart, and they enter the judgement of those who reject Wisdom’s call and rebuke (Prov 1:29-33).

Being on the receiving end of a rebuke from Jesus does not necessarily mean exclusion and judgement (cf. 9:51), and Jesus will teach later “If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him” (17:3). Thus, there is reason to consider that Jesus viewed the Pharisees and teachers of the law as his brothers, and his rebuke of them was intended to elicit the response of repentance that Jesus continually looks for and commends (5:32; 10:13; 11:32; 13:3, 5; 15:7, 10). However, the Pharisees and the lawyers retain the title of “fools” (ἄφρονες, v. 40) that Jesus gives to them for they do not listen to Wisdom’s rebuke.<sup>405</sup>

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<sup>402</sup> James Dunn notes how in the early church “it would appear that the *thought of pre-existence* [concerning Christ] *initially entered early Christology by the application of Wisdom terminology to Christ...*[and though] Jesus thought of himself as Wisdom’s *messenger...*there is no evidence that Jesus thought of himself as pre-existent Wisdom”. Ibid., 237 (emphasis author’s). Fitzmeyer notes the NT tradition of referring to Jesus as God’s wisdom, affirms that patristic commentators viewed the wisdom in v. 49 as referring to Jesus, suggests the possibility that Luke is here clarifying the implications of 7:35 and 11:30, but also raises Conzelmann’s objection that Luke does not equate Jesus with the pre-existent Sophia. Fitzmyer, *Luke X-XXIV*, 950.

<sup>403</sup> Dunn affirms this by stating that the “thought of pre-existence first came in through a Wisdom Christology, where Jesus was understood as the embodiment and fullest expression of Wisdom.” Dunn, *Unity and Diversity*, 243.

<sup>404</sup> See Dunn who notes that this type of speech between Jewish factions was not uncommon in the latter Second Temple period. Thus he states “firm and unyielding claims to be the only legitimate heirs of Israel’s inheritance, and sharp, hostile, often vituperative criticism of other Jews/Judaisms”, were common. Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 281. In spite of the common factionalism and “vituperative speech” within first century Judaism(s), Dunn also notes an overarching unity regarding the importance of the Temple, God, election, and Torah. Ibid., 286-92. See also Mullen who believes that the antagonism between Jesus and the Pharisees in the gospels has been overstated by the Evangelists and is akin to what Dunn has just described. Mullen, *Dining*, 51.

<sup>405</sup> The term ἄφρονες appears only one other time in Luke in the parable of the rich fool (12:16-21). It is used numerous times in the Septuagint translation of Proverbs in reference to the fool and to folly. Johnson

Thus it appears in Luke that Jesus accepts hospitality from even with those whom he denounces and who are not completely accepting of his message.<sup>406</sup> Therefore, while meals can be places of mission and ministry for Jesus, “the meal can also be the setting for the obfuscation and rejection of the revelation of the journeying guest, the “lord”...of the banquet.”<sup>407</sup> But we need to keep in context that the fact that Jesus is eating with the Pharisees, indicates acceptance of them and fellowship with them, and they of Jesus. In the light of the strict demarcation and selectivity of Jewish commensality viewed in Ch. 1, Luke’s continued placing of Jesus with Pharisees at table, even with the apparent hostilities, highlights an on-going relationship. And as such, the banquet communities hearing Luke’s Gospel are being counselled on their relationships with other hostile groups- perhaps even members of their own families. Jesus’ example is to continue table-fellowship with anyone.

In this meal scene, Jesus’ rebuke is also directed at the Pharisees and lawyers because of their exclusion of the poor from their tables. Though these Jewish leaders are fastidious and disciplined in outward observances of purity such as ritual washings, and tithing their mint and rue, they have fallen short of the weightier matters of almsgiving,<sup>408</sup> justice and the love of God, humility, and shepherding and teaching the people. They fail to move beyond the inadequate love of “sinners”, described by Jesus as only being directed toward those who love them, and doing good only to those who will reciprocate (6:32-34).

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also alludes to the fool who resists God’s wisdom as being rooted in the Biblical tradition, and adds that it “is also a staple of the Hellenistic diatribe”. Johnson, *Luke*, 189. See, however, Gowler who stresses that ἄφρονες is akin to being a “denier of God”. Gowler, *Portraits*, 228.

<sup>406</sup> In relation to Jesus dining with Pharisees, Poon maintains that their hostility to Jesus indicates being “under judgement”. However, the meal scenes themselves do not portray conflict from the side of the Pharisees, but conflict is in every case initiated from Jesus. Nor does being on the end of a rebuke by Jesus indicate exclusion or judgement as is the case with James and John (9:51). Poon, “*Superabundant*,” 227.

<sup>407</sup> Moessner, *Lord of the Banquet*, 146.

<sup>408</sup> There are thirteen uses of ἐλεημοσύνην (give alms, kindness) in the NT and two are in Luke (here and 12:33) and eight in Acts (cf. 6:30, 38; 16:9; 18:22, 29). Johnson sees a Lukan emphasis that “uses possessions language consistently to symbolize internal responses...[so that] internal qualities such as righteousness should be expressed by the sharing of possessions.” Johnson, *Luke*, 189.

On first reading the mission of Jesus seems to be thwarted in the preaching of good news at the Pharisee's house due to the conflict that ensues. However, if viewed within the Jewish tradition of the righteous rebuke, Jesus' speech at the dinner table is consonant with his mission objectives. The meal setting affords Jesus an intimate opportunity in which to rebuke his brothers' folly in order that they may respond to Wisdom who is present in their midst. In fact, in Prov 9, Wisdom is described in the language of a meal:

She has slaughtered her animals, she has mixed her wine,  
she has also set her table.  
She has sent out her servant-girls, she calls  
from the highest places in the town,  
"You that are simple ("ἄφρων"), turn in here!"  
To those without sense she says,  
"Come, eat of my bread  
and drink of the wine I have mixed.  
Lay aside immaturity, and live,  
and walk in the way of insight" (Prov 9:1-6 NRSV).<sup>409</sup>

Jesus' mission of salvation to bring good news to the poor, the prisoners, the blind, and the oppressed is implicit in his rebuke. These leaders of Israel that are withholding alms for the poor (v. 41), neglecting justice and the love of God (v. 42), coveting places and positions of public honour (v. 43), burdening people and failing to help them (v. 46), persecuting the prophets sent by God<sup>410</sup> (vv. 47-51), and withholding knowledge from the people and obstructing them in devotion to God (v. 52). Jesus, the harbinger of good news does not shy away from challenging those who obstruct this good news, even when he is the meal guest in someone else's home. This strong love serves those at the table in the desire to discipline them like sons (Prov 3:11) for "open rebuke is better than hidden love" (Prov 27:5). For Jesus has already taught that one must "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you,

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<sup>409</sup> See Judith McKinley who observes that although Wisdom's invitation is open and without discrimination, "demand comes with this gift. The verb *turn in* implies turning aside "from" and there is an urgency in her imperative *Come*...those who eat Wisdom's meal must leave the state of immaturity, or the company of the immature." Judith E. McKinlay, "To Eat or not to Eat: Where is Wisdom in this Choice?," *Semeia*, no. 86 (1999): 78 (emphasis author's).

<sup>410</sup> On Luke's use of the Hebrew Bible Frein suggests that in "using parts of the First Testament as models for his story of Jesus, Luke expresses his assumption that his audience knows and reveres the principal figures and plot lines of the Biblical stories." Frein, "*Genre*," 10.

bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you” (6:27-28), and therefore there is reason to consider that this is his motivation here.<sup>411</sup>

The role of the women who no doubt made all the preparations for the meal is implicit in the domestic meal setting. Though they provide the setting and the labour which affords Jesus’ mission and ministry an opportunity for expression and advancement, they are not the focus. But setting tables, purchasing and growing food, preparing meals, serving at table, and cleaning up do not just “happen”. Much toil and energy is exerted in such enterprises. As we have seen, Jesus is present as “one who serves”, but the conciseness of the Lukan Gospel keeps the primary focus on the mission of Jesus. The banquet communities may be hearing that their homes and tables must be kept open, even to those hostile and belligerent toward Jesus’ mission, such as the Pharisees.

## **9. Eating at a Pharisee’s house 14:1-24<sup>412</sup>**

This third and last shared meal<sup>413</sup> between Jesus and Pharisees is surprising given the events at the dinner table in 11:37-54. The Pharisee is unnamed and this is the only one of the three meal settings to occur on the Sabbath. Even though Jesus is most likely invited to this meal as he was with the first two Pharisees,<sup>414</sup> it would be reasonable to consider the relationship between Jesus and both the Pharisees and lawyers was strained beyond breaking point. In the narrative flow between the meal of 11:37-54 and the one presented here at the house of a

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<sup>411</sup> On this saying of Jesus to “love your enemies”, Charlesworth observes that “no other Jew, or Jewish group, drew that extreme inference from the relevant ethical passages in the Old Testament”. Charlesworth, *Jesus within Judaism*, 38.

<sup>412</sup> Josephus, *Life* (279), states that the sixth hour was the “hour our laws require us to go to dinner on Sabbath days”. William Whiston, *The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1996).

<sup>413</sup> The Greek φαγεῖν ἄρτον is literally “to eat bread” and is used again (φάγεται ἄρτον) by the teacher of the law in 14:15 to refer to the feast in the kingdom of God. Although Jesus sends the Twelve out on mission with the instructions to take no ἄρτον (9:3), it would seem he expects that some must use their homes and their bread to support himself and his disciples.

<sup>414</sup> Cf. Fitzmyer, *Luke X-XXIV*, 1040.

leading (ἀρχόντων)<sup>415</sup> Pharisee, Jesus has warned his disciples to “Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy” (12:1). However, Jesus’ accusation of hypocrisy is not exclusively levelled at the Pharisees, but also to the crowds (τοῖς ὄχλοις 12:56). Another Sabbath controversy erupts in 13:10-17, when Jesus heals a woman, and though no Pharisees or lawyers are named, that they were present as the “humiliated opponents” (v. 17) is consistent with the Lukan narrative surrounding synagogue and Sabbath controversies. Immediately preceding the meal at the prominent Pharisee’s house, Jesus is warned by a delegation of Pharisees that his life is in danger due to Herod’s desire to kill him (13:31). Therefore, although Jesus is being “carefully watched”<sup>416</sup> at the Pharisee’s house, the relationship between himself and the lawyers and Pharisees is not yet completely severed.

The meal setting is lengthy and consists of four distinct units: (1) vv. 1-6, the Sabbath<sup>417</sup> healing of a man who is suffering from dropsy,<sup>418</sup> (2) vv. 7-11, instructions on banquet seating arrangements, (3) vv. 12-14, instructions on banquet invitations, (4) vv. 15-24, the parable of the great banquet. However, apart from unit one, the content of the other three units is specifically related to hospitality and meals and therefore will be engaged more thoroughly in order to decipher how Luke presents Jesus’ views on hospitality.

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<sup>415</sup> In relation to Luke’s use of “rulers”, Johnson notes that they “form the broadest category of those who oppose the prophet”. Johnson, *Luke*, 223.

<sup>416</sup> The use of παρατηρούμενοι here carries the sense of “furtively observe” as it does in description of the Pharisees and lawyers observing Jesus in 6:7.

<sup>417</sup> Jesus has already defied Jewish law regarding healing on the Sabbath by delivering a demonised man (4:31-37), healing a man with a shrivelled hand (6:6-10), and healing a crippled woman who was “bound by Satan” (13:10-17). Johnson notes that the Babylonian Talmud was clear in forbidding Sabbath healing (cf. *bT Shab.* 18a; 53b; 75b; 108b; 111a; 128a; 140a; 147a-148a). Johnson, *Luke*, 212.

<sup>418</sup> Karris suggests that in Luke’s day, “a person with dropsy was a symbol of an avaricious person”, and that Luke “may be pointing ahead to the problem the well-to-do will have with Jesus’ teaching about inviting the unfortunate to their banquets”. Karris, *Eating*, 47. See also Green, *Luke*, 546-47.

Taking the meal scene at face value, Jesus appears to be the only one speaking. His first and second questions (vv. 3b, 5) leave the Pharisees and lawyers silent (v. 4a)<sup>419</sup> and unable to answer (v. 6). In his third monologue, Jesus observes how the dinner guests picked the πρωτοκλισίας (places of honour, cf. 11:43; 20:46) and expounds a parable with conventional wisdom about honour and shame concerning seating arrangements at banquets. The irony is thick on a number of fronts. Firstly, Jesus is no “honoured guest” at this meal and yet, again he usurps the position of the host by initiating questions and delivering lengthy lessons about how to conduct oneself as a dinner guest. In essence, he is excluding himself from being bound by the advice he gives to his guests. That is, while he is exhorting them to take the lowest place when the guest of someone else, he himself assumes the highest place by initiating and dominating discussion.<sup>420</sup> Jesus is presented at this meal, as with others, as one who has authority over the host. Despite the cultural conventions of the day which placed much weight on issues of honour and shame regarding the role of hosts and guests, Jesus undermines the norms of social stratification and reciprocity and dictates proceedings as he sees fit.<sup>421</sup> Jesus’ mission has been shown to involve preaching and teaching and it is clear here, that like the previous meal scenes with Pharisees he does plenty of both at table. Furthermore, Luke emphasises that Jesus’ host is not just a Pharisee, but a “prominent” one (14:1). In fact, because of Jesus’ host being a leader among Pharisees, by virtue of his position he would be automatically assured places of honour at banquets and in the synagogue. Jesus’ remarks would bring shame on his host.<sup>422</sup> There can be little doubt that those who first heard these stories would have been amazed at the brashness and impropriety of Jesus’ behaviour at table—unless, of course, they know from the narrative

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<sup>419</sup> Johnson suggests their lack of response is odd “because silence was generally taken for consent in legal affairs (Cicero, *De Inventione* 1, 32, 54: “*taciturnitas imitatur confessionem*”), but also because the rabbinic testimony is quite clear in disallowing healing on the Sabbath”. Johnson, *Luke*, 223.

<sup>420</sup> See Johnson who lists the following documents as evidence of the ancient importance to ascribing banquet seating positions: *The Letter of Aristeas* 183-187; Plutarch, *Table-Talk* 1:2; Petronius, *Satyricon* 38, 70; Juvenal, *Satires*, 5:16-19; 11:129-132; Jas 2:1-3. *Ibid.*, 224.

<sup>421</sup> Green, *Luke*, 550-51.

<sup>422</sup> Regarding agonistic themes of honour and shame in this meal scene, see Gowler, *Portraits*, 248-49.



his divine identity as the messianic prophet, who like all the prophets before him, will be ultimately rejected (11:47-51; 13:33-35; 18:31-33).<sup>423</sup> For it would appear that contra his own directive about humbling, rather than exalting oneself, Jesus appears to be neglecting the former and doing the latter (cf. Prov 25:6-7).

Moessner aligns the eating and drinking of the Pharisees with the stubborn and ungracious children of Israel who forgot the blessings of God in the desert wandering. Thus he asserts that it “is in the meals with the Pharisee-Scribes that this slavery to an unrepentant heart is the most pervasive. At table Jesus confronts a smug security in the blessings of wealth and prestige that the Pharisee-Scribes enjoy as leaders of “this generation” in the land”.<sup>424</sup> This “smugness” is challenged by Jesus in vv. 12-14 when he gives concrete instructions about how his fellow dinner guests are to act when they host a luncheon or a dinner.<sup>425</sup> Jesus advises them not to invite those they share kinship and economic parity with, for they will reciprocate (v. 12), but instead to invite the poor, crippled, lame and blind (v. 13).<sup>426</sup> Blessing will ensue, for although they are unable to reciprocate, reward will be conferred at “the resurrection of the righteous” (v. 14).

It is clear here, as in 11:37-54, that one of the chief criticisms Jesus makes against the Pharisees and lawyers is that they exclude the poor and disabled from their tables, invite only their own kind, fail to help others, and neglect justice. As the messianic prophet, Jesus

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<sup>423</sup> As Moessner highlights, “with Luke picturing Jesus as Lord of the house of the Kingdom of God and host of the banquet of salvation, the imagery in 14:7-14 should alert us that far more is at stake than friendly words of correction about rewards.” Moessner, *Lord of the Banquet*, 157.

<sup>424</sup> *Ibid.*, 274.

<sup>425</sup> “The distinction between ἄριστον and δεῖπνον (translated “luncheon” and “dinner”) is that between the two Jewish meals of the day (or possibly for Luke the Roman equivalents): a late morning meal and a late afternoon meal, which was the main meal of the day. The mention of both provides for comprehensiveness.” Nolland, *Luke 9:21-18:34*, 750.

<sup>426</sup> Johnson observes that in Lev 21:17-21, the lame, blind, and crippled, are forbidden from participation in the priesthood. Furthermore, in Qumran “these disqualifications were extended to the exclusion from the Holy War of the end-time...[and] participation in the eschatological banquet”. Johnson, *Luke*, 225.

echoes the same criticism made by the prophet Ezekiel concerning Israel's leaders. In an extended prophetic denunciation, Ezekiel adjures the shepherds of Israel:

Woe to the shepherds of Israel who only take care of themselves! Should not shepherds take care of the flock? You eat the curds, clothe yourselves with the wool and slaughter the choice animals, but you do not take care of the flock. You have not strengthened the weak or healed the sick or bound up the injured. You have not brought back the strays or searched for the lost. You have ruled them harshly and brutally (34:2b-4).

By contrast, the reign of the Davidic king Jesus (cf. 1:32, 69; 3:31; 18:38-39; 20:41-44) is demonstrated in healing the sick and by coming to "seek and save the lost" (19:10). The shepherds of Ezekiel's day feed only themselves and devour the flock (v. 10). The LORD promises to remove these shepherds and give his flock good grazing land, rich pasture (v. 14), good crops, and remove famine in the land (v. 29). The negligent shepherds, on the other hand have fed themselves on good pasture but trampled the pasture and muddied the waters for the flocks (vv. 18-19). Jesus, by contrast, feeds the people (cf. 9:10-17). When Jesus is criticized again by the Pharisees and lawyers for eating with toll-collectors and sinners in Lk 15:1-2, he responds with a parable (vv. 3-7) concerning lost sheep that again echoes Ezekiel's charge against Israel's leaders. The indictment for the leaders in Jesus' day is that they have not sought out the lost sheep ("sinners") even though there is "more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent" (v. 7).<sup>427</sup>

Interestingly for this study, the core of both Jesus' and Ezekiel's denunciation of Israel's leaders centres on images of eating and drinking. The leaders denounced by Ezekiel have overfed themselves and at the same time deprived the flock of adequate food. In the meal settings of 11:37-54 and 14:1-24, Jesus criticises Israel's leaders in much the same way. Thus again we are shown by Luke that how one eats and drinks, and with whom, are

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<sup>427</sup> On the similarities of Jesus' ministry in Luke and those of Yahweh in Ezekiel 34, see Fitzmyer, *Luke X-XXIV*, 1222, 1226.

symbols and signs of one's standing with God.<sup>428</sup> But perhaps more than that, Ezekiel's call for Israel's leaders to feed the flock, and Jesus' call to the Jewish leader's to include the poor and lame at their tables, are not metaphors, but issues of economic justice. Thus, the women who cook and serve at table in the mission of Jesus and the early church, are emulating the actions of the true shepherd Yahweh, and also Jesus. If one of the key images of Yahweh is one who provides food as creation's host, and Jesus calls people to feed the poor and excluded, then those who do so in the banquet communities, namely women, are acting as shepherds and hosts also.

In 14:1-21 Jesus has denounced the injustice and greed of Israel's leaders and instructed them that healing the sick takes precedence over Sabbath legalism (vv. 3-6). He also exposed their insatiable love of honour and implored them to humble themselves (vv. 7-11), and scrutinised their inclination to economic and social banquet reciprocity<sup>429</sup> by ordering them to invite the "poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind" to their tables (vv. 12-14, 21).<sup>430</sup> Finally, the dinner concludes on the theme of judgement when Jesus teaches that the way one acts at table has a bearing on whether one gets to sit at table in "the feast in the kingdom of God" (v. 15).<sup>431</sup> The theme of invitation is threaded throughout this parable of the great banquet (vv. 15-24), and as such, this theme underscores one key aspect of Lukan

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<sup>428</sup> This point is reiterated by Moessner who claims that "Jesus uses the home-meal imagery of the Kingdom and its banquet to announce that he is the host. Only those who receive him as guest in their home can receive him as Lord and host of the Banquet of the Kingdom of God". Moessner, *Lord of the Banquet*, 158.

<sup>429</sup> This practice of reciprocity was widespread in Greco-Roman culture, and as Esler points out, people "who gave to their social equals, even to the extent of inviting them to banquets, did so in the hope of receiving benefits in return or to cement valuable friendships." Esler, *Community and Gospel*, 176.

<sup>430</sup> Esler highlights the fact that "it was virtually unknown in Hellenistic cities for representative from the top and from the bottom of the social hierarchy to gather together in a single association". Ibid., 193.

<sup>431</sup> Nolland warns that in Luke, "the kingdom-of-God banquet is not so exclusively future as this pious remark should probably be taken to assume: in Jesus' own ministry, God is saying "come, for the banquet is ready" (indeed meal fellowship with Jesus is potentially an anticipatory experience of this eschatological banquet)". Nolland, *Luke 9:21-18:34*, 755. See however, Ugo Vanni who argues that there has been some contact in the tradition between Luke's gospel and the text of the Apocalypse. Vanni, among other texts, parallels Lk 14:5-16 with Rev 19: 9 ("Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!"), as evidence that "in the Apocalypse the Lukan idea of sharing a banquet typical of the kingdom of God undergoes a dizzying intensification along the same lines and becomes an invitation to the wedding feast of the Lamb, now that the kingdom of God has been established." Ugo Vanni, "The Apocalypse and the Gospel of Luke," in *Luke and Acts*, ed. G. O'Collins and G. Marconi (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1993). *ibid.*, 22.

mission. For Jesus makes it clear that those who ignore his invitation to both open up their own tables and participate in his banquet, will “not get a taste of my banquet” (v. 24).<sup>432</sup> In Chapter 3 we will theologically reflect on this theme of invitation regarding mission for the contemporary church.

In this the last meal Jesus partakes of with the Pharisees, some further comment is in order. Though the Pharisees are constantly linked in description by Luke with the teachers of the law/lawyers (5:17, 21, 30; 6:7; 7:30; 11:53; 14:3; 15:2), once Jesus reaches Jerusalem the Pharisees are mentioned for the last time in 19:39 when they address Jesus as διδάσκαλε and ask him to silence his disciples. But from 19:39 onwards the Pharisees are never mentioned as a group and nor are they implicated in plotting the arrest and death of Jesus.<sup>433</sup> This falls to the chief priests, elders<sup>434</sup> and lawyers, all of whom Jesus has earlier referred to when he stated in 9:22, “The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and lawyers, and he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.” Thus from 19:39, the Pharisees disappear from the Lukan narrative while one or a combination of the chief priests, lawyers,<sup>435</sup> and elders/leaders (1) 19:47, seek to kill him; (2) 20:1, question Jesus’ authority; (3) 20:19-20, try to get Jesus arrested by sending spies; (4) 22:2, were trying to get rid of Jesus but feared the people. In relation to his arrest, trial and death sentence, they connive with Judas Iscariot to betray Jesus (22:4-6), forcefully arrest Jesus (22:52), put Jesus on trial and take him to Pilate (22:66-23:1), and vehemently accuse Jesus before Herod (23:10). The two disciples on the road to Emmaus tell the stranger that the

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<sup>432</sup> On the textual connections between Lk 14:15-24 and the Gospel of Thomas, see Fitzmyer, *Luke X-XXIV*, 1050-53.

<sup>433</sup> Moessner wonders concerning this last mention of Pharisees “whether Luke wishes to exonerate them of any official complicity in Jesus’ death”. Moessner, *Lord of the Banquet*, 192. See also Dunn who agrees that despite the plethora of references concerning Pharisees, the Jesus tradition “preserves virtually no memory of Pharisaic involvement in Jesus’ execution.” Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 785.

<sup>434</sup> Nolland states that the elders “are leaders of the local Jewish community. They are the body of reference to whose judgment the Jewish community would naturally defer. Since early sources are few, the precise limits of their function remain unclear”. Nolland, *Luke 1-9:20*, 316.

<sup>435</sup> The term “teachers of the law” (νομικός) appears for the last time in 14:3, from whence Luke uses the term “lawyers” (γραμματεὺς) (15:2; 19:47; 20:1, 19, 39, 46; 22:2, 66; 23:10).

chief priests and rulers handed Jesus over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him (24:20). But nowhere in Luke's Gospel are the Pharisees linked with plots to murder Jesus or harm him in any way. This, however, does not exclude the possibility of their presence in the συνέδριον (22:66), for in Acts Luke does identify Pharisees being present in the Sanhedrin when the respected Pharisee Gamaliel, who was also a νομοδιδάσκαλος, persuades the Sanhedrin to release the imprisoned apostles (5:27-41). And in 23:1-10, Paul, a Pharisee himself, divides the Sanhedrin by eliciting the support of the Pharisees present by his profession of belief in the resurrection of the dead. Though Pharisees are present in both cases, on both occasions they are not presented as hostile to the followers of Jesus. Moreover, Luke notes that there were a number of Pharisees who were believers in Jesus (Acts 15:5). Thus, in general we can say that while Jesus is often at odds with Pharisees in Luke, the three occurrences of Jesus dining with them signifies fellowship to some degree. Perhaps Luke is signalling to some members of the actual banquet communities that, although they have significant differences with other Jewish groups, they can still eat with them, just as Jesus did. And perhaps the Lukan Jesus' willingness to dine with Pharisees alludes to the openness of early church meal sharing in contrast to the more exclusive Greco-Roman banquets, and the closed meals of groups such as the Essenes.

Whatever the case, Jesus' mission to preach the good news of the kingdom of God is manifested here with the healing of the man suffering from dropsy (vv. 2-4). The healings Jesus performs in Luke are signs of the presence of the kingdom of God. But more than that, here we see that not only is hospitality in Luke a means and method for Jesus' mission, it also becomes the criterion by which that mission manifests. Jesus uses meals to extend his mission of preaching the good news of the kingdom of God, but also as an acted parable of that good news. By citing specific details of who the Pharisees and lawyers should include at their table, Jesus is consistent with his gospel message thus far in Luke. For in 7:22, Jesus

responds to the question about the authenticity of his messianic mission by stating that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cured, the dead raised, and the good news is preached to the poor. In exhorting his fellow guests to include such as these at their table, Jesus is inviting them to be bearers of the good news of the kingdom, and thus partners in his divine mission to the lost sheep of Israel.

Jesus' sagacious and prophetic speech entreats his fellow meal guests to heed his call and move beyond the suspicious table-fellowship that flavours this setting, into the banquet that Jesus, as Lord of the Banquet, hosts. As with the other meal settings, Jesus becomes host and serves his guests through his teaching and wisdom. This is the pedagogical dimension that characterised Jesus' mission. Jesus taught regularly in Synagogues (4:15, 31; 6:6; 13:10), out in the open and on his way to Jerusalem (5:3, 17; 13:22), and in the Temple (19:47; 20:1; 21:37). This practice of Jesus in Luke was continued by the disciples in Acts (2:42; 4:2, 18; 5:21, 25, 28, 42; 11:26; 15:35; 17:19; 18:11; 20:20; 21:21; 28:31). Thus in this meal setting the mission of Jesus is enacted through teaching. Moreover, Luke's "implied guests", themselves likely sitting around tables as they hear this story expounded, are included in the instructions of Jesus. We need not be cautious of imagination here; we know that churches met in homes and around meals. Therefore, they too are being addressed at table by Jesus concerning places of honour at table (cf. Jam 2:1-7), and including the poor, crippled, blind and lame at their meals. This is, I believe, why meals are so prominent in Luke: they act as a pedagogical device for the domestic meal setting where the churches are gathering. Just imagine one of these houses where some poor, some wealthy, some women, some men, some Jews, some Gentiles are gathering around a meal listening to Jesus at table by way of Luke's Gospel. While the relevance is lost in the contemporary church with its designated buildings and professional clergy, we need to view these Lukan meal scenes in the context that they were first heard.

Regarding the ministry of table service, those who crush the grain, knead the dough, and break the bread for this meal are as ever behind the scenes. Jesus and his meal guests are served by the women who labour to enable the mission of Jesus to proceed. Jesus will later teach on the privilege of table-service with the following:

Suppose one of you had a servant plowing or looking after the sheep. Would he say to the servant when he comes in from the field, ‘Come along now and sit down to eat’? Would he not rather say, ‘Prepare my supper, get yourself ready and wait on me [διακόνει] while I eat and drink; after that you may eat and drink’? Would he thank the servant because he did what he was told to do? So you also, when you have done everything you were told to do, should say, ‘We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty (17:7–10).’<sup>436</sup>

Though their ministry is vital, Luke’s goal is to present Jesus as the messianic Son of God, and as such, those who serve Jesus at table in the homes are to do so with the knowledge of the honour of such a position.

## **10. Zacchaeus 19: 1-10**

As the Lukan travel narrative of 9:51-19:44 comes to a climax, Jesus will share his last meal outside of Jerusalem before his trial and death with a wealthy chief toll-collector named Zacchaeus. Luke places this hospitality scene as Jesus passes through Jericho and connects it with the previous pericope of the healing of a blind man as Jesus approached Jericho (18:35-43). Zacchaeus is keen to see Jesus, though due to his short stature<sup>437</sup> and the large crowds, he was unable (v. 3). He decides to run ahead and climb a sycamore fig tree to get a better view of Jesus’ arrival at and consequent passing through Jericho (v. 4). However, when Jesus stands under the tree where Zacchaeus is perched, he looks up, addresses Zacchaeus by name, tells him to climb down immediately, and then Jesus invites himself

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<sup>436</sup> Though in this passage Luke primarily refers to slaves (δοῦλοι), the point being drawn out is that those who serve at table in the mission of Jesus are to do so with humility, giving deference an honour to the one they serve.

<sup>437</sup> In Luke μικρὸς (small, short, little) does not have negative connotations, for the μικρότερος in the kingdom of God is greater than John (7:28), and judgement awaits those who cause one of these μικρῶν to sin (17:2). Moreover in 12:32, the Father is pleased to give the kingdom to the μικρὸν ποίμνιον (little flock).

(and no doubt his entourage), by stating he must stay at Zacchaeus' house (v. 5).<sup>438</sup> Zacchaeus' response is to welcome Jesus with joy (v. 6 χαίρων), a characteristic strikingly absent from Jesus' meals with the Pharisees and lawyers.<sup>439</sup>

What would those hearing this story see, hear and feel in relation to Zacchaeus? It would not be inconceivable that they would despise him. For even though Jesus has demonstrated a willingness to dine with toll-collectors, Zacchaeus is a "chief" among them, and Jesus has just taught that it is very hard for the rich to enter the kingdom of God (18:18-43). The response of the people in v. 7 is an indication of what Luke has in mind: they grumble "he has gone to be the guest of a "sinner" (cf. 5:30; 15:2), even though Jesus views him as a "son of Abraham".<sup>440</sup> But in another sense, Zacchaeus is an "anti-Abraham" figure initially, due to his reluctance to host Jesus as he passes through.<sup>441</sup>

The response of Zacchaeus to Jesus inviting himself to stay at his house, and to the grumbling of the crowds, is to give half of his wealth to the poor and recompense fourfold anyone he has defrauded (v. 8).<sup>442</sup> The reply of Zacchaeus could be read in the narrative as occurring on the way to his house; however, several elements suggest strongly that he was

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<sup>438</sup> The Lukan use of δεῖ (must, it is necessary) frequently expresses the divine urgency and thrust of Jesus' mission (2:49; 4:43; 9:22; 13:33; 17:25; 22:37; 24:7, 44).

<sup>439</sup> Joy in Luke is associated with salvation and proper reception of Jesus and his message. In 1:44 Elizabeth's baby leaps for joy in the presence of the child Mary carries, and Mary herself declares that her "spirit rejoices in God my Savior" (1:47). The angel announces to the shepherds "good news of great joy that will be for all the people" (2:10). The disciples return with joy from their successful mission of preaching the good news of the kingdom (10:17). In ch. 15, the cycle of being lost, repentance, and joy are all present in the story of the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost son. The rejoicing over sinners who repent is shared both by people, and heaven (15:6-7, 9-10, 25). As Jesus enters Jerusalem the whole crowd of disciples erupt in joyous praise of God (19:37). Even Herod expresses joy when he sees Jesus (23:8). As Luke's gospel begins with the joyful announcement of the birth of the saviour Jesus, he ends his gospel with the disciples worshipping the risen Jesus and returning to "Jerusalem with great joy" (24:52).

<sup>440</sup> Thus, just as for the daughter of Abraham Jesus healed on the Sabbath (13:16), the song of Zechariah finds fulfilment "He has helped his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful to Abraham and his descendants forever, (1:54). The parallels of this story and the story of Abraham being visited by the LORD in Gen 18:1-16, have been detailed by Andrew Artebury, "Zacchaeus: 'A Son of Abraham'?", in *Biblical Interpretation in Early Christian Gospels: The Gospel of Luke*, ed. Thomas R. Hatina, *LNTS* (London: T & T Clark, 2010), 26-27.

<sup>441</sup> *Ibid.*, 28. Artebury goes on to say that the contrast between Zacchaeus' poor hospitality and Abraham's "famous hospitality," "is simply another indication of Zacchaeus' undesirable character".

<sup>442</sup> Luke may be alluding to the Mosaic Law in Num 5:6-7. See also Exod 22:1. See also Fitzmeyer who notes that the coupling of toll-collectors with "sinners" is most likely due to the dishonest and extortive practices of the former. Fitzmyer, *Luke I-IX*, 591-92.



at table in his house. Firstly, Zacchaeus welcomes (ὑποδέχομαι) Jesus, and Luke’s two other uses of the verb ὑποδέχομαι (10:38; Acts 17:7) both refer to being welcomed into a house. Secondly, the aorist indicative active tense of the verb εἰσῆλθεν (go in, enter) used by the grumbling crowd suggest Jesus and Zacchaeus are inside the house when he makes his almsgiving promise. Thirdly, the description that Zacchaeus “stood up”<sup>443</sup> to make his confession (v. 8) indicates a prior posture of reclining or sitting down. And finally, in response to Zacchaeus’ economic reforms, in v. 9 Jesus pronounces that “salvation<sup>444</sup> has come to this house”, which strongly suggests that is in fact where they are located. Furthermore, Jesus’ desire to lodge at Zacchaeus’ house will no doubt include the obligatory hospitality of a meal. Therefore it is within the narrative constraints of this text, and the proclivity of Luke to place Jesus in domestic meal scenes, to view Jesus and Zacchaeus (and presumably other disciples) sitting at table in Zacchaeus’ home.

The parallels between the story of the rich ruler and the rich toll-collector are seen when Zacchaeus is described as ἀρχιτελώνης and πλούσιος (v. 2b), and the rich ruler is described as ἄρχων (18:18) πλούσιος (18:23). Luke’s intentions can’t be certain, but the narrative of 19:1-10 goes some way to clarify any ambiguities concerning one’s possessions and following Jesus. Does one have to renounce all possessions and give away all wealth to be a disciple of Jesus (14:33; 18:28)? The ambiguity is solved here in the home of Zacchaeus: almsgiving is a visible sign of the reception of the good news of the kingdom of God, and an indication of the repentance that Jesus seeks; however, salvation comes to Zacchaeus even

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<sup>443</sup> The verb σταθεις (aorist, passive, participle), can be both translated in the NT as “stand/stood up” or “standing” (cf. Lk 18:11; Acts 17:22; 25:18; 27:21), however, it makes more sense when rendered “stand up”.

<sup>444</sup> Luke is the only Synoptic author (except the variant reading of Mk 16:8) to use σωτηρία (17 times in Luke-Acts). Apart from here at the house of Zacchaeus, the three other occurrences in the Gospel are all in Zachariah’s song (1:69, 71, 77). Vanni suggests again a parallel with the Apocalypse due to the fact that the three occurrences of σωτηρία in that book all appear in doxologies. He states that “In both Luke and the Apocalypse the idea of *sōtēria* is so deeply felt that it finds lyrical expression in song.” Vanni, “*The Apocalypse*”, 21. Nolland summarises the Lukan perspective on salvation by observing that “The coming of Jesus is to be equated with the coming of the kingdom of God, which is in turn to be equated with the coming of salvation. Zacchaeus has encountered the “today” of salvation, the same today of which Jesus speaks in 4:21. This is also the salvation anticipated in 1:69”. Nolland, *Luke 18:35-24:53*, 908.

though he keeps half of his wealth, but also in part due to his transformation into a generous host. But neither can we gloss over the fact that Jesus has previously stated he is calling (warning) the rich to start with almsgiving and relinquish their wealth. As Johnson notes, Luke reiterates that “the disposition of the heart is symbolized by the disposition of possessions. The one who clings to his wealth is equally closed to the prophet’s call. The one who shares generously with the poor can welcome the prophet gladly.”<sup>445</sup> Zacchaeus has served Jesus well by firstly, after initial reluctance, welcoming him with joy into his house for lodging and meals, and secondly, by serving the poor with his wealth.<sup>446</sup> But practically speaking, what is it that the poor need most? Jesus has previously warned the over sated, “Woe to you who are well fed now, for you will go hungry” (6:25). And Jesus has exhorted people to give to the poor (11:41; 12:33; 18:22), and invite them to their banquets (14:13, 21). We need to keep in mind that in the ancient world, as for many today, poverty equated with starvation. What the poor needed most was bread. Is Luke telling his implied guests to open their homes and their tables to the poor, just as Zacchaeus is now doing? That such practice is present in Acts would suggest this is the case (9:36; 10:4, 31; 24:17). Bread is “good news” to the poor, and as we noted earlier, providing them food is a central characteristic of Yahweh as creation’s host (Deut 10:14–18; Ps 132:15; 146:7), and as such, the righteous will do the same (cf. Isa 58:7; Ezek 18:7, 16). Luke is likely telling the rich among the banquet communities to become “Sons of Abraham” by being transformed like Zacchaeus from reluctant and greedy traitor, to generous provider of hospitality.<sup>447</sup>

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<sup>445</sup> Johnson, *Luke*, 287.

<sup>446</sup> Moessner highlights this by stating “Like the faithful and wise steward (12:42-44), Zacchaeus distributes the goods of his Master’s “household” and does so when he comes. And like the servant (17:7-10), he shows his abiding gratitude for the privilege of serving the Lord by continuing to serve others....[H]e has humbled himself (14:11; 18:14)”. Moessner, *Lord of the Banquet*, 170.

<sup>447</sup> Artebury, “Zacchaeus,” 30.

Finally, although Zacchaeus offers Jesus hospitality, it is not just eating and drinking with Jesus that allows participation in his kingdom. It is only the open-hearted reception of Jesus, and the accompanying repentance, that enables one to enter into his kingdom. For Jesus has already warned regarding future judgement: “Then you will say, ‘We ate and drank with you, and you taught in our streets.’ But he will reply, ‘I don’t know you or where you come from. Away from me, all you evildoers!’” (13:26-27). And as is the case with Zacchaeus, eating and drinking with Jesus must include a welcome and embracing of his mission. This will involve repentance in the form of allowing one’s home and possessions to be utilised in the on-going mission of Jesus. Zacchaeus eats and drinks with Jesus, but also allows his home and his table to be yielded in the service of that mission. Luke’s implied guests are to do the same. In this last meal scene on the journey to Jerusalem, the mission of Jesus is aided and sustained by the hospitality of Zacchaeus. The salvation that the messianic prophet Jesus brings manifests in Zacchaeus’ household, thus confirming the outworking of his mission to seek and save the lost (v. 10). But as Artebury rightly points out, Luke is accentuating in this story the ability of Jesus to miraculously transform the despised “anti-Abraham” Zacchaeus, into a gracious host like that of Abraham.<sup>448</sup> Thus, a note of hope is given to the rich for whom it is difficult to enter the kingdom of God (18:25).<sup>449</sup> Just as the LORD told Abraham *μὴ ἀδυνατεῖ παρὰ τῷ θεῷ ῥῆμα* (Gen 18:14 LXX), Jesus tells those who are aghast that even the rich will have trouble entering the kingdom, *δυνατὰ παρὰ τῷ θεῷ ἐστὶν* (18:27). Therefore, in 19:1-10, Luke tells his listeners that Jesus resembles Yahweh,<sup>450</sup> and that they in their banquet communities, especially the rich, should resemble Abraham, but also that true “salvation” manifests in householders becoming generous hosts like Zacchaeus.

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<sup>448</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>449</sup> A number of commentators argue that 18:18-30 and 19:1-10 must be read as a narrative unity. Ibid., 22 n.20.

<sup>450</sup> Ibid., 31.

## **11. Conclusions on Mission and Ministry in Lukan Meal Scenes**

The question this thesis proposed was to what extent the mission of Jesus and the early church was facilitated through domestic hospitality and ministry as table-service, depicted in the meal scenes of Jesus in Luke's Gospel. What is clear in the Lukan meal scenes is that plenty happens in homes and at tables when Jesus is present. People repent, are healed, saved, silenced, taught, rebuked, humiliated, included, excluded, forgiven, condemned, and of course, they eat and drink. In the Lukan meal scenes, the house and the table are dynamic places of action. Furthermore, Jesus eats with sinners, the righteous, the rich, the poor, men, women, the reputable, the disreputable, leaders, the despised, the esteemed, friends and enemies. Thus in general, we can say that the Lukan Jesus eats with anyone, apart from Gentiles, and he does whatever he pleases at table. But more specifically we can assert the following.

Firstly, in becoming a disciple of Jesus a person concurrently cedes their house and possessions in service of the mission and ministry of Jesus. This is the case with Simon Peter, Levi, Martha and Zacchaeus. The three meals with the Pharisees, however, show a resistance to joining with Jesus, and therefore indicate that their homes will not be on-going places for the mission of Jesus, nor will their tables be hosted by the Lord of the Banquet. What this means is that while domestic hospitality through meals was a means of mission, this occurs only in houses where the head of the household welcomed Jesus. There is no coercion or intimidation for householders who host Jesus to join him or provide their houses as places for mission, though whenever Jesus is present in their homes, his mission is proceeding with or without their consent. But to cede one's house to Jesus, and also to his sent-ones, is an indication of accepting the invitation to the eschatological banquet he offers. And of course the opposite is true: to not show domestic hospitality to Jesus and his followers is to reject the kingdom Jesus offers.

Secondly, Jesus does not himself host a meal in a domestic setting, but is reliant upon the invitation of others to their homes and meals.<sup>451</sup> In Christological terms this is not the case, for Luke would have Jesus as the default host in any context. If, as Luke wants us to believe, Jesus is the Davidic messiah, indeed, the Son of God, then as such he is the host of every meal, just as Yahweh is creation's host. Thus when Jesus often takes over the meal usurping the authority and honour of his host, stripped of the messianic and divine titles, he would appear rude and arrogant. But if accepted in the terms Luke the evangelist presents him, it would be utterly appropriate, even required, for Jesus to be host at any table that welcomed him, or not.

Thirdly, Jesus eats only with Jews, both religious and pious as well as "wicked" Jews whom Luke calls "sinners". However, his most common meal partners in Luke are drawn from the first group, namely Pharisees. Furthermore, Jesus upsets those with high standards of purity concerning table fellowship, however, he does not do so to such an extent that the Pharisees exclude him from their meals. At least from the purview of Luke, Jesus may push boundaries *within* the Judaisms of his day; however, Luke presents Jesus as largely remaining within them. By eating with "sinners" and toll-collectors, Jesus is inviting them to participate in his kingdom. It was on this point, rather than issues of food purity that tensions with Jewish leaders arose. In Luke, on-going table-fellowship with Jesus forms a major part of receiving salvation and participating in his kingdom.

Fourthly, Jesus and his disciples rely on and use domestic hospitality for their mission to preach the gospel of the kingdom of God, and the women who facilitate such hospitality are ministers who serve that mission. In one regard, Luke may continue the historical snubbing of cooks by paying only scant attention to them. But silence does not equate with

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<sup>451</sup> Mary Marshall's extensive thesis posits that the historical Jesus was considered an "uninvited guest"; however, for reasons to be elaborated in Chapter 3, I think the text of Luke-Acts says otherwise. Marshall, "Jesus and the Banquets".

condemnation. What he does say indicates the importance of these women ministers in the early church. However, it is clear that table service must be subordinated to the mission and word of Jesus. Be that though it may, women frequently serve Jesus at table and their ministry is implied through the meal scenes. The instances of Simon's mother-in-law (4:38-41), the women who serve Jesus (8:3), and Martha (10:38-42), show that women had significant places of ministry through table service in the house churches where believers gathered. Even the "sinful" women in 7:36-50 serves Jesus at table and thus becomes an example to all "sinners" that they too can serve the mission of Jesus. What Luke is attempting to do is to define the ministry of table service in its relation to the word and mission of Jesus. This is not the same as ignoring it; rather, he addresses the propensity for such things to become central, when for him, table service must be subservient to the pre-eminence of the mission of Jesus. It is the Lukan silence on cooks that provides the hermeneutical key on deciding for or against his snubbing of cooks. Unlike Philo and Josephus who are both highly critical of the lavishness of non-Jewish dining practices, and Philo is scathing with regards to cooks, Luke has no such criticism. Neither is there high praise, but the absence of criticism, as well as the several instances where Luke addresses table service in order to define its place, suggest that he valued the ministry of the women who served the mission of Jesus and the early church by their table service (cooking). And since Luke describes the ministry of Jesus as one who serves at table (*διακονῶν*), those who do likewise, namely women, are thus emulating Jesus.

Fifthly, these domestic meal scenes in Luke serve as a pedagogical device by which he can address the actual banquet communities that are recipients of his Gospel. Through the scenes of Jesus in homes and at table, they too become extended guests in all that happens. Thus, through his Gospel, Luke places Jesus as host of the houses and tables where people are gathering to remember him, share his message, and await the kingdom he promised in

which he would eat and drink with them (cf. 22:16, 30). In this way the Lukan meal scenes act as a means of on-going instruction and teaching to the banquet communities meeting in homes. What Jesus says at table in Luke he also says to the early church gathered in homes and at tables.

Finally, we can confirm some earlier assertions put forward concerning Lukan hospitality. Firstly, we can agree with Karris that Jesus' meals with "sinners" are acted parables of the kingdom of God.<sup>452</sup> That is, through table-fellowship Jesus demonstrates his acceptance of sinners. Secondly, Artebury is correct in positing that Luke intentionally chose the practice of hospitality because he believed it was the most effective means of gospel transmission to Gentiles, for it best demonstrated the message of Christ.<sup>453</sup> Thirdly, Koenig drew attention to the "sweeping assertion" by Paul Minear that for Luke "table fellowship as interpreted by table talk constituted the gospel."<sup>454</sup> We can now state that this is in fact the case. Hospitality, as manifested through meals in homes, is a hermeneutical key in the Gospel of Luke. Furthermore, in Luke's summary description of the early church's activity (Acts 2:42-47), he chooses to highlight the sharing of meals (2:42). The fellowship, friendship and unity described by Luke were the manifestation of both the spiritual sharing in the good news of Jesus Christ, and the material sharing of meals.<sup>455</sup> That is, when Luke sums up the early Christian community, he describes it as one unified and bonded in partnership with the good news of Jesus Christ through the sharing of meals in homes. It is as though the spiritual reality of their shared faith in Jesus Christ is manifested in meal sharing with "glad and sincere hearts" (Acts 2:46b).

Regarding hospitality in a wider sense beyond Luke-Acts, in the NT Christians are exhorted to "practice hospitality" (φιλοξενίαν, Rom 12:13), to offer "hospitality to one another

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<sup>452</sup> Karris, *Eating*, 32. See also Poon, "Superabundant," 227.

<sup>453</sup> Artebury, *Entertaining Angels*, 179.

<sup>454</sup> Koenig, *New Testament Hospitality*, 119.

<sup>455</sup> Witherington, *Acts of the Apostles*, 160.

without grumbling” (φιλόξενοι, 1 Pet 4:9), and “entertain strangers” (φιλοξενίας, Heb 13:2). All three of these exhortations to hospitality are immediately preceded by the command and encouragement to love one another (ἀγάπη, Rom 12:13 and 1 Pet 4:9; φιλαδελφία, Heb 13:2), which signifies the manner in which hospitality strengthened and deepened the bonds of fellowship between members. The people were also encouraged to provide hospitality for those who are itinerant preachers (3 Jn 8), and widows were especially exhorted to offer such hospitality to the church (1 Tim 5:10). And leaders were to lead by example with the ἐπίσκοπον role description declaring the ability to be hospitable a must (1 Tim 3:2; Titus 1:8). One such leader, Gaius, is commended by Paul for his excellent hospitality offered to the whole church (Rom 16:23). Having seen in Chapter 1 the way meals can universally socialise groups and enable bonding, as well as the way the significance of meals figured in the Hebrew Bible and Luke-Acts, is it too far a leap to posit again that this hospitality exhorted in the NT was essentially expressed domestically through meals? This is not a question for this present study, but suffice to say that the practice of hospitality in the NT is not limited to Luke-Acts. This thesis is ultimately presenting the biblical and theological basis that in general, food matters, and more specifically, hospitality around meals in homes was fundamental and central in the mission of Jesus and in the early church—at least it was in Luke-Acts.

It is now time to move onto the “dessert” of this thesis where we will reflect theologically on how these findings can become “alimentation” to the communities that still meet around the memory of Jesus.



### **Chapter 3: Implications for the Contemporary Church**

In Chapter 1, the case was made for defining hospitality more narrowly as sharing meals through showing them to be both a biological necessity, and a universal means of social and cultural formation for humans. The issue of food as theology and theology as food was raised to draw attention to the need for a deeper appreciation of food within the theological enterprise, and to reverse the overlooking of the importance of food, especially regarding cooks, throughout history. We saw that in the Hebrew Bible, food and hospitality are prominent markers of Jewish identity both in relationship to Yahweh, and also to one another. The provision of food to all the earth's inhabitants is a key characteristic defining Yahweh as "creation's host". And for Israel, significant events were frequently associated with food and meals. We also examined the Greco-Roman banquet tradition of the symposia, as well as intertestamental Jewish texts, and concluded that while obvious similarities exist between symposia and both Jewish and early Christian dining practices, it could not be said with confidence that Luke and the early church adopted the practice. Jewish dining practices were less ostentatious and elitist than their Greco-Roman counterparts, and had an emphasis on food purity as faithfulness to God, as well as nuances of divine gift and joy.

In Chapter 2 an analysis of the motif of hospitality in Luke was undertaken to show how domestic meal scenes were a locus for the mission of Jesus, and consequently for the early house church communities. Jesus at table becomes a way in which the actual church at table that Luke writes for can give Jesus primacy in their own gatherings. And as such, table service undertaken by women was seen as a vital ministry, as long as it did not usurp the prominence of the mission of Jesus, and the early church, to proclaim the "good news of the kingdom of God". Domestic hospitality was pivotal in the mission of Jesus and his disciples and in the on-going mission of the church to the Gentiles. Not only in the practicalities of

sustenance and lodging, but domestic hospitality was a primary expression and enactment of the good news.

Now in Chapter 3, we seek to apply these findings through theological reflection. As a minister in a Christian community, I take seriously the need to reflect on and interpret the biblical tradition in order to guide and inform the church's mission and ministry. Such reflection cannot be definitive or exhaustive, but I shall consider one main point each for contemporary mission and for ministry, and then dialogue in a round-table manner with a number of authors who have reflected theologically concerning the role of food and hospitality for the church. I will end the thesis by way of a personal reflection regarding hospitality.

## **1: Mission in a Contemporary Milieu**

Luke is an evangelist who wanted people who read/heard Luke-Acts to believe in and follow Jesus Christ—to believe in the “good news”. Mission in Luke-Acts presents Jesus as the divine messianic messenger, who brings salvation through proclaiming the good news and enacting it through healing, exorcisms, and commensality with anyone, calling people to repentance, offering forgiveness of sins through his death and resurrection, and sending out others to continue this mission. Luke was not seeking to convey information alone, but a transformative message that he considered to be of divine origin. For as Pope Benedict has elaborated concerning the NT origins of the gospel, the “good news” was not only novel content, but the gospel presented by authors such as Luke is a performative message that “makes things happen and is life-changing”.<sup>456</sup> That being said, we need to consider the validity and justification for Christian mission in, what is today, a largely secular and

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<sup>456</sup> Scott W. Hahn, *Covenant and Communion: The Biblical Theology of Pope Benedict XVI* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2009), 173-74. See also George Newlands and Allen Smith who state that the Christian gospel is the starting point in thinking about hospitality. George Newlands and Allen Smith, *Hospitable God: The Transformative Dream* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), 6.

pluralistic society. How can it be justified to share the “good news” without being perceived as bigoted or intolerant? A brief understanding of mission in our modern context will be useful before exploring the helpful notion of invitation that arises from the study of Luke’s meal scenes.<sup>457</sup>

In the 1950’s, the German missiologist, Karl Hartenstein coined the term *missio Dei*,<sup>458</sup> or “the God of mission,” proposing that mission starts with theology, not ecclesiology.<sup>459</sup>

Australian missiologists Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch draw upon the work of South African missiologist, David Bosch, who stated concerning the *missio Dei* that mission is doctrinally established in Trinitarian notions, rather than soteriological or ecclesiological notions.<sup>460</sup> This approach does not side-line the church in God’s mission, but delivers it from the modernist ecclesiocentrism that bundled modernity with Christianity as a unified package. Bosch, in his influential work, *Transforming Mission*, argued that theology itself must be missiological in nature. There is no church or proper theology without mission being at the heart, for mission needs to provide the impetus for theology because “rightly understood, [theology] has no reason to exist other than critically to accompany the *missio Dei*”.<sup>461</sup> This raises the importance of reading Scripture with a missional hermeneutic, especially the NT.<sup>462</sup> For it is clear that the writers of the NT were involved in the mission of Jesus in their various contexts and by way of their particular challenges. Luke’s Gospel, then, is a mission document written to aid and assist the nascent house churches in their

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<sup>457</sup> The understanding of mission presented here is rooted in the Protestant tradition.

<sup>458</sup> Christopher Duraisingh critiques *missio Dei* as “ecclesio-centric”, and instead proposes the medieval notion of *concursum Dei*, which he interprets as “divine accompaniment” and “God’s presence and “walking with” all of creation”. Christopher Duraisingh, “From Church-shaped Mission to Mission-shaped Church,” *ATR* 92, no. 1 (2010): 20. While there are some helpful proposals in Duraisingh’s critique of *missio Dei*, I am not convinced a wholesale rejection of that term is warranted.

<sup>459</sup> Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch, *ReJesus: A Wild Messiah for a Missional Church* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2009), 24.

<sup>460</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>461</sup> David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1991), 494.

<sup>462</sup> On this point of the primacy of mission, see Alan Hirsch who argues that mission ought to be the organising principle of the church, with ministry as the *means* to mission. Alan Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways: Reactivating the Missional Church* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2006), 235-36.

mission.<sup>463</sup> As theologian Kim Kirsteen points out, from inception to the present day, the church is historically and theologically inseparable from the Christocentric mission in which it is called to participate.<sup>464</sup>

But in a Western pluralistic, postmodern and secular context, how, if at all, can Christians justify enunciating this “gospel” message? In what has been described as a post-colonial and postmodern culture, Christian mission can be a very sensitive subject, impugned as imperialistic and arrogant. Missiologist and anthropologist, Paul Hiebert, notes that the history of modern mission occurred at the same time as Western colonialism, and as a consequence, missionaries sent from Western nations often imbibed the philosophical substructures of modernism, such as its positivist epistemology.<sup>465</sup> With the emergence of the epistemic shift loosely termed “postmodernism”, Hiebert notes that postmodernity is “deeply suspicious” of reason due to the perception that it was the foundation for the “Enlightenment, modernity, and Western society”.<sup>466</sup> And while Hiebert understands the validity of the postmodernist reaction to positivism’s “intellectual superiority” and cultural hegemony, he maintains that instrumentalism and postmodernism are lacking truth and concrete solutions to global problems.<sup>467</sup> Hiebert proposes that in order to move forward from the modernist-postmodernist stalemate, critical realism<sup>468</sup> offers a renewed place for human emotions and ethical concerns, subjectively experienced, as vital in defining

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<sup>463</sup> Dean Flemming, “Exploring a Missional Reading of Scripture: Philippians as a Case Study,” *EQ* 83, no. 1 (2011): 7.

<sup>464</sup> Kim Kirsteen, “Mission Theology of the Church,” *IRM* 99, no. 1 (2010): 41-42.

<sup>465</sup> Paul G. Hiebert, *Missiological Implications of Epistemological Shifts: Affirming Truth in a Modern World* (London: Continuum International, 1999), 24. See also Elizabeth Glanville who notes the cultural hegemony, perhaps unintended, that accompanied some attempts at cross-cultural mission by Western missionaries. Elizabeth Betsy Glanville, “Missiological Reflections on Difference: Foundations in the Gospel of Luke,” *Mission Studies* 26, no. 1 (2009): 74.

<sup>466</sup> Hiebert, *Missiological Implications*, 53.

<sup>467</sup> *Ibid.*, 68.

<sup>468</sup> Dunn notes that critical realism has its roots in Ben Meyer’s intensive study of Bernard Lonergan’s *Method in Theology*, especially in regards to the theory of knowledge. Meyer in his work *Reality and Illusion*, states “The hallmark of Critical realism is its insistence on the empirical (data), the intelligent (questioning and answering), the rational (the grasp of evidence as sufficient or insufficient, the personal act of commitment) as – all of them together – entering into true judgement.” Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 110.

objective reality without obfuscating the tools of scientific objectivity.<sup>469</sup> Moreover, aligned with instrumentalism, critical realism is aware of the distance that can exist between reality and comprehension of it, but consonant with positivism, it maintains humans can know truth, and that order is comprehensible to some degree by our reason.<sup>470</sup> In essence, critical realism acts as dialectic between modernity and postmodernity by, on the one hand, acknowledging the ontological foundations for reason and knowledge as real, and on the other, that subjectivity is the means by which we interpret the world around us.

In applying critical realism to Christian mission, Hiebert asserts several principles as essential. Firstly, critical realists assume that truth can be known and shared, and at the heart of Christian mission are confessions that are believed, and can be believed.<sup>471</sup> Secondly, critical realists “respect people of other beliefs as thinking adults and show respect for their convictions.” However, conversion is a plausible possibility and this means a reorienting of one’s life to an embracing of Christ as one to be followed and trusted. This does not mean that one’s cultural and social history and identity need to be replaced with Western assumptions.<sup>472</sup> Finally, critical realism causes us to take a global perspective in missions and a holistic approach to human need.

To summarise this brief overview of mission in the contemporary context, the nature of mission needs to be grounded in the nature of God. This is consonant with the notion of God as creation’s host and precedes Christological aspects of mission. What this offers is that while Christians will want to affirm the salvific and divine nature of the gospel of Jesus Christ, this mission can begin in an affirmation of all peoples and cultures being subsumed under the aegis of God as host. This understanding can “soften” the sometimes perceived “hard edge” of Christian mission with its specific and exclusive claims concerning Christ.

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<sup>469</sup> Hiebert, *Missiological Implications*, 74.

<sup>470</sup> *Ibid.*, 71.

<sup>471</sup> *Ibid.*, 108.

<sup>472</sup> *Ibid.*, 109.

And this is where the hospitality at the heart of Lukan mission can provide a way forward in the modern context.

Thus, it is the act of *invitation* in the meal scene hospitality of Luke-Acts that offers a way forward in respecting the other, and also bearing witness to the body of knowledge that is the gospel of Jesus Christ. What we see in the Lukan meal scenes is a consistent theme of invitation. Simon Peter hosts Jesus at his house and the people in Capernaum unsuccessfully “tried to keep [Jesus] from leaving them”. The initiative to host Jesus in one’s home comes from the host, as is the case with Levi who “held a great banquet for Jesus” (5:29), Simon the Pharisee “invited Jesus” (7:36), Martha “opened her home to him” (10:38), and an unnamed Pharisee “invited [Jesus] to eat with him” (11:37). The prominent Pharisee in 14:1 does not explicitly invite Jesus, however, Jesus’ instructions to his host on who to invite (vv. 12-14) imply this was likely the case. At any rate, there is no description in the narrative of Jesus arriving uninvited. Only in the case of Zacchaeus does Jesus invite himself into a home (19:5-6), and even here, prior to the visit of Jesus, Zacchaeus “wanted to see who Jesus was”. And after the resurrection, the two travellers on the road to Emmaus “strongly urge” Jesus, who appeared to be “going further”, to stay with them (24:28-29).

Conversely, when Jesus and his disciples are rejected, they are not to take issue. Jesus is rejected at Nazareth and “he walked right through the crowd and went on his way” (Lk 4:30). The Gentile centurion believes in Jesus’ power to heal but does not want him to come under his roof, and Jesus obliges (7:1-10). After healing a demonized man in the Gerasene region, all the people there “asked Jesus to leave them”, and consequently Jesus “got into the boat and left” (8:37). And when in Samaria, “the people there did not welcome him”, but Jesus rebukes his disciples James and John for their suggestion to “call fire down from heaven to destroy them”. Jesus quietly leaves and goes elsewhere (9:51-56).

A similar pattern of invitation is apparent in Acts, but with an emphasis on Gentiles. The Ethiopian eunuch “invited Philip”, who was an evangelist, to sit with him (8:31), and Philip teaches him the “good news about Jesus” (8:35). The Gentile centurion Cornelius invites Simon Peter to come to his home (10:1-47), and Simon tells the Gentiles gathered there about the “good news of peace through Jesus Christ” (10:36). The proconsul Sergius Paulus on the Island of Cyprus, “sent for Barnabas and Saul because he wanted to hear the word of God” (13:7). In Pisidian Antioch, Paul and Barnabas are invited by the synagogue ruler to speak (13:15), and they subsequently preach and teach Jesus and the good news. After the service the “people invited them to speak further” at the next Sabbath (v. 42). While in Philippi, an influential woman named Lydia overhears the message, believes, and then invites Paul and his companions to enjoy hospitality at her home (16:13-15, 40). Even the Philippian Jailer respectfully asks Paul and Silas “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” (16:31), and then after hearing the “word of the Lord”, the jailer brings them into his house (v. 34). The Athenians take the initiative to bring Paul before the Areopagus and ask him “May we know what this new teaching is?” (17:19-20). And fittingly, Luke ends his two volume work with Paul preaching the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ in a house, welcoming all who came (Acts 28:30-31).

Therefore, a key point for the contemporary church is that in Luke-Acts Jesus has primacy at the table *within* the community of faith, which is of course open to anyone as evidenced by the example of Jesus and the early church in Luke, but this is not a primacy that is forced upon the wider society. This is not to downplay the kerygmatic motivation that is clearly a part of Jesus’ mission in Luke and also the mission of the early church in Acts. For Jesus or his followers do not cease speaking when so commanded by the authorities (cf. Lk 13:31-33; Acts 4:1-22; 5:29). Moreover, Luke believes there are dire consequences for not welcoming Jesus and his messengers (cf. 10:10-16; 13:26-26). However, the overarching

picture in Luke-Acts is that Jesus is willing to go where he is invited and welcomed, and does not force his way in when unwelcomed. The mission is one of invitation, not coercion or intimidation.

Within a contemporary Western postmodern and secular context, the church is free to preach and teach the message of Jesus within Christian communities, as well as welcoming everyone and anyone who desires to participate. However, there is no mandate to preach and to teach the message of Jesus Christ to people who don't want to listen or are not interested. And while the Lukan Jesus appears to dominate at table and often usurps the role of host, that Luke only presents him at table eating with Jews, suggest that Jesus' actions therefore take place within the covenant community of Israel. The practice of invitation respects the right of the other to decline, does not necessarily demand anything, nor does it assert control of the other. But neither does one's own identity and traditions need to be nullified or disowned. Churches can be gracious hosts to anyone, especially the poor, socially despised and marginalised, and vulnerable, just as Yahweh is creation's host and just as Jesus exhorted his followers to do so, while maintaining their Christological identity. The key point is not that invitation is a "tool" or "method" for mission, but that it reflects the graciousness of God to all creation, and the example of Jesus. How this works out in concrete practices of hospitality is open to a plethora of creative responses by church communities.

The act of *invitation* works perfectly well with regards to meals in homes, or community meals and events in church buildings. People of faith can examine to what extent their domestic tables, and their ecclesial ones, are places of gracious welcome and inclusion as opposed to places of exclusion. Koenig talks of a "mission-meal synergy" and believes that churches largely underestimate meals in regards to mission.<sup>473</sup> The Lukan meal scenes

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<sup>473</sup> Koenig, *Soul Banquets*, 9.



encourage us to discern that the way we eat with others, actually conveys something of our theology and understanding of Jesus.<sup>474</sup> And as such, I will finish this section with the question posed by Koenig: “What might God be doing in the huge number of table settings today where Christians and non-Christians dine together?”<sup>475</sup> It is a question that can only be answered, and experienced, with the issue of an *invitation*. For Luke and the wider Mediterranean world in which he lived and wrote, meals in homes were normal and natural places of invitation to others. But as we saw in Chapter 1, the universal nature of meals as formative and nurturing of social bonds and culture, mean that what was true for Luke is also relevant for today. Rodney Stark has shown that social networks are fundamental in the growth of conversionist groups such as the early church, by way of a “*structure of direct and intimate interpersonal attachments*”.<sup>476</sup> And this is why hospitality through meals in homes was so important in Luke-Acts: the household was a ready social unit through which the message of Jesus could readily take hold. Therefore, without expectation or coercion on the part of church communities, engagement with the wider society can proceed through the offer and invitation of hospitality that is predicated upon, and given impetus by, the open and inclusive table-fellowship of Jesus and the early church depicted in Luke-Acts.

## **2. Ministry as “Mundane” Service**

The understanding of ministry from Luke’s meal scenes is that table service undertaken by women was an intrinsic part of serving the mission of Jesus and the early church. Ministry is rooted in Jesus’ supreme example of one who “serves at table”. In today’s context, ministry has moved in many different directions and there are a number of challenges for the church. Don Saines notes that in the last few decades a crisis in the understanding of ordained ministry has been precipitated positively by a flourishing of new lay ministries and

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<sup>474</sup> Finger, *Of Widows*, 185.

<sup>475</sup> Koenig, *Soul Banquets*, xv.

<sup>476</sup> Stark, *The Rise of Christianity*, 20 (emphasis author's).

paradigms, and negatively by therapeutic and managerial notions.<sup>477</sup> Theological and cultural issues have also contributed to this “crisis” as churches respond to the pluralistic and secular contexts they find themselves in. Saines highlights the increasing collaborative nature of new ministry and mission paradigms emerging from an “ecclesiology from below”, but adds ironically that their effectiveness is still entrenched on the response of church leadership.<sup>478</sup>

Turning to a broader picture of ministry in the NT, we find a multiplicity of ministry roles or functions such as bishops and deacons (1 Tim 3:1-13; 5:17-9), prophets and teachers (Acts 13:1-3), apostles, evangelists, pastors (Eph 4:11), and finally, the Pauline metaphor of the body which asserts the ministry of all believers (1 Cor 12:4-38).<sup>479</sup> Such diversity must take into account various churches developing along different timeline and contexts,<sup>480</sup> but also that ministry was not confined to a select few, as is often the case today.

This lack of fixed terms for ministry in the NT has led Edward Schillebeeckx to argue that although there are not two distinct types of Christians, clergy and laity, there are various functions, one of which is hierarchy.<sup>481</sup> And Schillebeeckx believes that the nomenclature of hierarchy, clergy and laity, can lead to a picture of ministry as being the gift of the whole people of God, but differing in function and expression.<sup>482</sup> It could be argued, however, that the contemporary context has been over-served by the hierarchical and clergy-centric nature of ministry, and that ministry is much too narrowly defined. In the light of the importance of

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<sup>477</sup> Don Saines, “Wider, broader, Richer: Trinitarian Theology and Ministerial Order,” *ATR* 92, no. 3 (2010): 511-12.

<sup>478</sup> *Ibid.*, 514.

<sup>479</sup> See, however, Saines who notes “terms such as *episkopos* and *presbyteros*, while common, were not dominant within early Christian communities until the fourth century CE...[T]here is no single definition or essence of the ordained ministry that stretches from the time of Jesus to today”. *Ibid.*, 521. On Charisma in Paul see Dunn, *Unity and Diversity*, 120.

<sup>480</sup> David Williams, “Ministry in the New Testament,” in *Ministry in Australian Churches*, ed. William Tabbernee (Melbourne: Joint Board of Christian Education, 1987), 17. For a fuller discussion on these roles see Dunn, *Unity and Diversity*, 112-34. For a discussion on historical images of ministry see Donald E. Messer, *Contemporary Images of Christian Ministry* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989), 33-46.

<sup>481</sup> Edward Schillebeeckx, *The Mission of the Church* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1973), 171.

<sup>482</sup> See also Schillebeeckx on this point. *Ibid.*, 189.

hospitality in Luke-Acts in the mission of Jesus and the early church, why don't we ordain cooks and good hosts, for instance? In my own ecclesial context it is common to see in church mission and doctrinal statements the following: "Ministers: the whole congregation". While the intent is to suggest and claim as central that we believe all of God's people are called to ministry in some form, the reality is oftentimes much different in practice. Luke gives us a deeper framework for ministry that although not disparaging offices and calling, permits and affirms the "everyday" service of "lay" people in their significant contribution to the mission of Jesus. Those who served at table were likened to Jesus with regards to their ministry (Lk 22:26-27). But if the central meal of the church can only be served by ordained clergy, then what message does this give the cooks and the hosts, not to mention the myriad of other people who undertake "mundane" and "menial" work for the *missio Dei*?

In the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century, Luther and Calvin corrected the medieval notion that only priests and monks received a divine call by teaching that most occupations could be a means to serving God.<sup>483</sup> Luther was ostensibly at odds with any claim by monks or nuns to seek favour with God or superiority over others by means of ascetic practices. Luther remarks, "What would the nuns and monks do if they heard that in the sight of God they are not a bit better than married people and mud-stained farmers?"<sup>484</sup> While Luther's remarks are stronger than they need be, the singular point that emerged is the removal of a dichotomy between clergy and laity and the reestablishment of the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers. Donald Messer states that "images of ministry that focus exclusively on clergy...are sterile because they cannot give birth to the fresh energies and vision needed".<sup>485</sup>

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<sup>483</sup> Messer, *Contemporary Images*, 78.

<sup>484</sup> Helmut Lehmann, ed. *Judgement of Martin Luther on Monastic Vows*, vol. 44, Luther's Works (Philadelphia: Fortress Press), 305.

<sup>485</sup> Messer, *Contemporary Images*, 66.

And it is at this point of widening the definition of ministry that our study in Luke brought to attention the vital role of domestic hospitality undertaken as table service. The fact that Luke makes repeated references to women serving in the domestic sphere, and that he likens Jesus as one who serves at table, alludes to the important place domestic hospitality and the provision of meals played in the mission of Jesus and the early church. The partnership between the kerygma of itinerants and table service of hosts in Luke-Acts offers an opportunity to affirm and acknowledge the “mundane” service of hospitality in modern ecclesial contexts. It is here that a brief engagement with the writings of a Simone Weil may help to expand what could be considered the sacramental nature of table service.

Born in Paris to Jewish parents in 1909, Weil studied philosophy and became involved in causes including briefly fighting against Spanish loyalists in the Spanish civil war, as well as identifying with the plight of factory workers.<sup>486</sup> A number of spiritual encounters led her to embracing (and being embraced by) Christ. She describes one of these which took place during a recitation of the poem by George Herbert entitled “Love bade me welcome”. Weil suffered various ailments and illnesses throughout her life, including debilitating headaches, and was noted for eating very little. She died at age 34 through refusing foods while in care for treatable illnesses.

Alec Irwin notes that for Weil, food, eating, and hunger were central images in her writings and philosophy:

Hunger brings the daily demonstration that our will is not free, that our bodies are inhabited—constituted—by forces over which we can exert only the most limited and fleeting control...Weil made hunger and eating central to her inquiries into all dimensions of the human condition. Food...is “the irreducible”.<sup>487</sup>

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<sup>486</sup> Claire Wolfeich, “Attention or Destruction: Simone Weil and the Paradox of the Eucharist,” *JR* 81, no. 3 (2001): 361.

<sup>487</sup> Alec Irwin, “Devoured by God: Cannibalism, Mysticism, and Ethics in Simone Weil,” *Cross Currents* 51, no. 2 (2001): 260.

But it is Weil's ideas on energy transfer and physical work that highlight the sacramental nature of "mundane" service. Irwin suggests this theory led Weil to conclude that in the act of physical labour,

the substance of the worker's body quite literally passed into the products of her work (grain or other foodstuffs), and from there into the bodies of the hungry...Weil discerned in these chemical, physical processes the same principle of sacramental transformation that lay at the core of Christianity, in the eucharistic transubstantiation of bread and wine into God's body and blood.<sup>488</sup>

Part of Weil's motivation was to dignify and elevate the status of the toil and exacting physical labour of peasants and farm workers. And we could add cooks here also. Weil asserted that such hard work, when undertaken in the right mind and intention, imitates Christ. Thus Weil proposed that if "the work of tilling the soil makes me get thinner, my flesh really turns into grain. If this grain serves for the communion host, my flesh becomes the flesh of Christ. Whoever tills the soil with this intention must become a saint".<sup>489</sup> And if the practice of hospitality must include the giving and sharing of food—and I have argued that it must—then Weil took this much farther by describing the production of food, and subsequently its preparation for meals, as the giving of one's life to provide sustenance for others. In a very concrete sense, then, the practice of hospitality entails and requires the giving of one's energy, time, resources, and food to others. Though our Western world is modernised in relation to food production, and therefore Weil's insight is perhaps lost to us, for the world of Jesus, and the two-thirds world today, food production is very much linked to survival. And by extension, the sharing of that food, which toil and hardship has produced, is indeed a very costly gift. Weil's insights would lead us to consider the sacramental nature of the menial work that underscores hospitality. Though Weil is at times mystical to the point of losing clarity in some of her writings, her well enunciated views concerning the sacramental nature of work are invaluable to my thesis. In Luke, domestic

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<sup>488</sup> Ibid., 266-67.

<sup>489</sup> Ibid., 267.

hospitality through meals plays a pivotal part in the mission of Jesus and the early church. Therefore, in the church, those who undertake all of the practical works to provide hospitality have, in Weil's language, their "flesh" become the "flesh of Christ". That is, cooks are priests and ministers.

Considering "mundane" work as sacramental also moves into the potential for a renewed perspective on epistemology. Montoya highlights the work of philosophy professor Lisa M. Heldke, who argues that food preparation challenges modern categories of epistemology by demonstrating a non-dualistic somatic knowledge, that is, a knowledge that is not solely abstract:

The knowing involved in making a cake is 'contained' not simply 'in my head' but in my hands, my wrists, my eyes and nose as well. The phrase 'bodily knowledge' is not a metaphor. It is an acknowledgement of the fact that I *know* things literally with my body, that I, as my hands, know when the bread dough is sufficiently kneaded, and I 'as' my nose know when the pie is done.<sup>490</sup>

Heldke is critical of the Cartesian dualism that subjugates the bodily senses in favour of the "higher" reasoning faculties and argues that philosophy has given little regard for the senses related to eating due to an erroneous assumption that they were somehow "lower" in importance. And Heldke posits that while "dispassionate objectivity" is understandable for science, it is not vital in preparing food because "good cooking is good in part because of the emotional attachment you have to the people for whom you're cooking, to the tools you're using and to the foods you're making".<sup>491</sup> Such views highlight the "embodied" nature of food preparation that warns against the Platonic dualism noted earlier in writers such as Philo, which sees the senses, and thus cooks, with suspicion. Furthermore, a greater appreciation of the way knowledge is embodied within physical labour, such as food preparation, democratises knowledge by positing that knowing how to make and bake a cake, for instance, is not epistemologically inferior to purely rational philosophical pursuits.

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<sup>490</sup> Mendez Montoya, *Theology of Food*, 52-53.

<sup>491</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.

Translating this for modern Christian communities, we could assert that theologising is not the sole domain of theologically trained clergy or academics, but also belongs to the laity, especially regarding those who labour to create hospitable spaces. And nor is theology necessarily bound to expression through only words, concepts, and thought, but is also expressed in bodily and communal activity such as preparing and sharing meals. Food *is* theology. This was at the heart of Lukan mission where itinerants worked in partnership with hosts, relying on one another to further the message of Jesus Christ. Hosting the church in one's home, as well as providing and preparing meals, is a deeply theological act, congruent with the message of Jesus' and the early church's inclusion of all at table.

In summary, not only can a greater appreciation of the physical labour of cooking challenge hierarchical definitions of ministry in the church, it can also serve to challenge the false dualism between knowledge and action. Much more could be explored, but for now it is important to raise the possibilities of a deeper theological engagement with the way physical labour, such as cooking, is ministry. And on this point, Montoya consistently reiterates that food matters and as such its theological marginalisation needs to be addressed. Montoya views God as an artistic chef who is generous, and transforms creation through sharing God's superabundance. Moreover, he states "God's sharing of food, and self-sharing *as* food, is the source of divine goodness, that heals spiritual and physical hungers, but in addition urges us to share with and care for one another".<sup>492</sup> Therefore, if Montoya can be theologically imaginative enough to propose "God as chef", then we can continue to reflect theologically on the work of those who labour to enable churches and homes, and indeed any human community, to be places of hospitality.

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<sup>492</sup> Ibid., 122.

### 3. Practical Approaches to Hospitality

In what follows, a number of authors who have reflected theologically on the role hospitality can play in the contemporary context and Christian communities are engaged with. As noted earlier, this round-table conversation is befitting of the theme of hospitality, with the aim being not to critique but to listen to how others have imagined ways the practice of hospitality manifests concretely. The challenges of trying to import ancient practices into the (post)modern context have been noted by Reta Halteman Finger. However, in concert with this thesis, Finger believes that “food, meals, and eating together continue to convey strong symbolism”, and asks that if “theology is communicated through meals, what kind of theology is the church communicating today?”.<sup>493</sup> In what follows, a number of proposals, warnings, and practical applications of hospitality are considered. These are presented in the manner of hors d’oeuvres, rather than main meals.

John Koenig in his book *Soul Banquets* practically applies some of his earlier works on hospitality, and is convinced of the missional nature of meals and the value of the ministry of hospitality. He suggests that churches take an inventory of all of their meal activities as a starting point in cultivating a deeper awareness and appreciation of the role they play in the church’s mission and ministry.<sup>494</sup> This has in fact been the approach undertaken in this thesis with regards to Luke’s Gospel. Beyond being mere literary devices, the meal scenes in Luke represent the importance of meal sharing in homes in the early church. Koenig also tells the story of how the gift of a sandwich to a homeless woman, and the subsequent conversation, launched the Interfaith Hospitality Network, which has seen over one hundred thousand volunteers in the USA hosting and serving the homeless and the hungry. The giver of that sandwich, Karen Olson, came to the realisation that this homeless woman was not

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<sup>493</sup> Finger, *Of Widows*, 280.

<sup>494</sup> Koenig, *Soul Banquets*, 41.



only hungry for food, but also for “human warmth and compassion”.<sup>495</sup> Thus, the fundamental and biological need for food became a means to a deeper spiritual and relational connection.

In his book, *Sharing Food*, theologian Shannon Jung outlines six practices that he encourages churches and Christians to consider: saying grace, sharing and hospitality, communal feasting, preparing food, fasting, and honouring our bodies. In saying grace, Jung believes that we give glory to God as the one who provides our food, we bless our food and table, but ultimately God, and through giving thanks we can cultivate gratefulness.<sup>496</sup> This approach alludes to the way Yahweh is depicted as creation’s host within the Hebrew Bible. With regards to sharing food, Jung reiterates what was previously argued in Chapter 1, that “[s]haring food is perhaps the primary socializing and civilizing activity of human beings”.<sup>497</sup> On the practice of feasting, Jung believes that in the church we have lost the art of communal celebration through shared meals because we “simply do not delight very well”. Reminiscent of the nuances of joy and divine gift within the Hebrew Bible considered in Chapter 1, Jung insists that recovering a joyful, doxological communal celebration of feasting that emerges out of a sense of God’s abundant generosity, can transform us.<sup>498</sup> The Lukan images of Jesus at table also provide impetus for churches to celebrate at an open and joyous table. On the practice of preparing food, Jung humorously, and perhaps accurately, suggests that food preparation is largely ignored by the Gospel writers because they were men. Several elements he advances in food preparing for Christians are service, mutuality, caretaking, and submission to others.<sup>499</sup> These elements were visible in Luke’s depiction of women serving at table in Luke-Acts. With regard to fasting, Jung emphasises the elements of prayer, confession, and penitence, but also adds the dimension of resistance to complicity

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<sup>495</sup> Ibid., 122-24.

<sup>496</sup> Jung, *Sharing Food: Christian Practices for Enjoyment*, 30-31.

<sup>497</sup> Ibid., 40.

<sup>498</sup> Ibid., 62-64.

<sup>499</sup> Ibid., 78-79.

in world hunger and overconsumption. And as such, Jung believes that “fasting could be the most valuable spiritual practice for...churches in our time”.<sup>500</sup> And finally, in honouring our bodies, Jung suggests we take seriously issues of health and diet, but even more so that we start with the theological conviction that “God created food and bodies for pleasure, for delight. And they are good”.<sup>501</sup>

In reflecting upon her extensive biblical and historical study on the communal meals in Acts, Reta Finger mentions a Mennonite Church that intentionally encourages its members to host meals for “unknown guests” in a gracious and inclusive practice of hospitality. She also cites a restaurant owned as a collective that each week provides free and abundant meals to anyone who will come. The owner, inspired by the example of Jesus, gave up ownership and turned the business over to the people who gather each week for free meals. Another example of Christian hospitality is a ministry called “Breaking Bread”, which provides meals for the poor each week, but maintains that volunteers and guests eat together as equals around tables. The Director believes that “this simple act of eating a meal together fosters trusting relationships”.<sup>502</sup> Such a view has been propounded through this thesis regarding the sharing of meals as a universal vehicle of enabling social cohesion, forming community and culture, and in the case of Luke’s gospel, enabling the mission of Jesus to be established and progressed. Something deeper and more profound than just physical nourishment can take place at meals.

Finger also considers the Catholic Worker movement, which has houses in low-income and multi-racial communities and shares meals by welcoming the poor as Jesus himself.<sup>503</sup>

Similar houses all over the USA provide daily hospitality through a common meal for

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<sup>500</sup> Ibid., 83. See also Bretherton who describes feasting and fasting as the “sacramental enactment of hospitality” because “feasting embodies a proleptic disclosure of the eschaton, while fasting ensures the eschatological tension is held.” Bretherton, *Hospitality as Holiness*, 144.

<sup>501</sup> Jung, *Sharing Food: Christian Practices for Enjoyment*, 103.

<sup>502</sup> Finger, *Of Widows*, 282-84.

<sup>503</sup> Pohl also highlights the Catholic Worker movement as a good example of Christian hospitality. Pohl, *Making Room*, 191-92.

immigrants and other vulnerable people. In her book *Visions of Charity*, Rebecca Allahyari writes more extensively about the Catholic Worker movement, but in particular, she notes that the founder, Dorothy Day, was inspired by a “French peasant and Christian agitator”, Peter Maurin.<sup>504</sup> In an open letter to the Bishops of the United States in 1933, Maurin wrote the following:

We need houses of Hospitality  
to give to the rich  
the opportunity to serve the poor...  
to bring the Bishops to the people  
and the people to the Bishops...  
to bring back to institutions  
the technique of institutions...  
to show what idealism looks like  
when it is practiced...  
to bring social justice.<sup>505</sup>

Maurin’s prophetic imagery echoed the way that in Luke, hospitality can bring rich and poor—indeed, preachers and cooks—together in mutually dependent relationships of guests and hosts.

Luke Bretherton, in *Hospitality as Holiness*, puts forward the hospice movement, with its Christian roots, as a practical expression of Christian hospitality. By the third and fourth centuries the church was founding and operating both hospices and hospitals to provide food, shelter, and care for the poor and sick. And with that in mind, Bretherton believes that the “modern hospice is thus situated in a tradition of Christian hospitality”.<sup>506</sup> Bretherton suggests, not explicitly, but implicitly, that the Christian hospitality expressed through the modern hospice movement is a form of prophetic resistance to solely secular notions of death and suffering, as well as the tendency to focus completely on medical technology regarding the sick. The historical influence of the Christian practice of hospitality, expressed

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<sup>504</sup> Rebecca Anne Allahyari, *Visions of Charity: Volunteer Workers and Moral Community* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 35.

<sup>505</sup> *Ibid.*, 37-38.

<sup>506</sup> Bretherton, *Hospitality as Holiness*, 184.

in care of those who are poor, the sick, and those who are dying, can still inform modern hospices. Therefore, “by recognizing, accommodating, and creating a ‘place’ for the suffering-dying, hospice care gives hospitality to vulnerable strangers”.<sup>507</sup>

Christine Pohl in her book *Making Room*, proposes a number of positive characteristics that define hospitable places: they offer shelter and sanctuary, celebrate life but also acknowledge brokenness, communicate a sense of welcome, inculcate particular commitments without coercing others, and nurture friendship and companionship.<sup>508</sup> She also provides a number of practical expressions concerning Christian communities and hospitality, such as the ministry of L’Abri. Begun in the 1960’s by Francis and Edith Schaeffer, L’Abri are places of Christian community and hospitality that welcomes spiritual seekers. The life of the L’Abri households becomes a type of “hospitality apologetic” where people are able to experience some of the rhythms and teaching of Christian spirituality while searching for answers to their questions. A similar approach is undertaken by Annunciation House, but from a Catholic perspective and with an emphasis on solidarity and advocating for the poor and marginal. Central to their daily rhythms of prayer, worship and work is the sharing of meals between volunteers and guests. Another significant expression of hospitality described by Pohl is L’Arche communities, which were started in 1974 by Jean Vanier, and bring together the mentally handicapped and volunteers to live in a faithful relationships grounded in Jesus’ gracious welcome of the poor. Vanier’s writings on hospitality have become significant resources for others wanting to emulate the hospitality of L’Arche. Other examples by Pohl are Good Works Inc., a Christian community that provides welcome and solidarity with the homeless, Jubilee Partners

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<sup>507</sup> Ibid., 186.

<sup>508</sup> Pohl, *Making Room*, 152-53.

welcomes refugees by providing them with food and housing, and The Open Door Community provide meals and sanctuary for the homeless and poor.<sup>509</sup>

In response to the global displacement of people and the currents of immigration across the globe, Pohl sees a recovery of hospitality as an important response to such “cross-cultural tensions”. While she is not advocating hospitality as a cure-all for these complex challenges, she believes intercultural conflicts, marginalisation and victimisation require hospitality as an essential means in finding resolutions.<sup>510</sup> Pohl argues that Christians are not as active or engaged on the issue of asylum and refugee concerns as they could be, and she proposes five areas of concern that the Christian tradition of hospitality can seek to address regarding asylum seekers and refugees. Firstly, churches must affirm the value of all people as well as a sober acknowledgement of human sinfulness. This keeps tension between the essential dignity of persons as derived from the doctrine of *imago Dei*,<sup>511</sup> but also the possibility of the danger and “evil intentions” posed by the stranger.<sup>512</sup> Secondly, an increased emphasis on hospitality for the most vulnerable and those perceived as having no “strategic value”, enable churches to continue in the Hebrew and Christian traditions of hospitality without concern for reciprocity.<sup>513</sup> In contrast to the economic values which often underpin policy discussions of asylum seekers, Pohl believes that the church can be a vocal advocate for the marginalised and needy who “have little strategic importance”.<sup>514</sup> Thirdly, the recognition of placing limits can help churches acknowledge the need to address the very real pressures of time, energy, and material resources in relation to hospitality. Genuine attempts need to be enacted to place guidelines around hospitality, rather than the hospitality of a host or host

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<sup>509</sup> Ibid., 189-95.

<sup>510</sup> Christine D. Pohl, “Responding to Strangers: Insights from the Christian Tradition,” *Studies in Christian Ethics* 19, no. 1 (2006): 83.

<sup>511</sup> Ibid., 86.

<sup>512</sup> Ibid., 91.

<sup>513</sup> Ibid., 92.

<sup>514</sup> Ibid., 94.

community being exhausted and thus ceased.<sup>515</sup> Fourthly, churches must wrestle with the complexities of welcoming strangers and preserving communal identity and boundaries. While such tensions are complex and sometimes intractable, Pohl argues that the Hebrew and Christian tradition starts with remembering that to “be the people of God is to remember one’s own captivity and release, and to use that experience to heighten sensitivity to those who are in need or are outside conventional expectations for welcome”.<sup>516</sup> Finally, churches need to respond to the needs of refugees and asylum seekers on several levels. Pohl suggests that both structural and personal responses are needed and that churches can play a role in both, firstly, in advocating policy responses that are not solely driven by economics and pragmatics, and secondly the personal response of building friendships across social boundaries.<sup>517</sup> Such approaches reflect the Lukan Jesus’ call to include the poor and marginalised at our tables, as well as the inclusion of the Gentiles into the people of God in Acts.

Many of the examples given above highlight communities that are extending hospitality to the poor, the marginalised, the homeless, and the hungry. Amy Oden observes that this particular focus has a long history in the church: “[e]arly Christians talk about hospitality to the sick and the injured, to the widow and the orphan, to the sojourner and stranger, to the aged, to the slave and imprisoned, to the poor and hungry.” The scope is broad, and rightly so. However, Oden sees a thread that unites all these groups is vulnerability, for they are often socially and economically marginalised, easily overlooked, and offer little chance or means at reciprocating the help and aid extended to them.<sup>518</sup>

Turning to hospitality regarding women and ministry, in my own context, women are ordained and serve the Lord’s Supper. However, Finger laments that a “supreme irony”

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<sup>515</sup> Ibid., 96.

<sup>516</sup> Ibid., 97-98.

<sup>517</sup> Ibid., 100.

<sup>518</sup> Oden, *And You Welcomed Me*, 20.

exists in many churches where women are not permitted to serve the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, but "are expected to prepare and serve actual food at church gatherings and soup kitchens and to show hospitality through sharing food in their homes".<sup>519</sup> And consequently, she rightly asks which of these two scenarios looks more like a "Jesus supper"? This has been one of the main points of this thesis: women's service at table, that is, as cooks, was valued and central in the mission of Jesus and the early church- at least in Luke-Acts. This is not to provide an argument that to this we must return, but simply to attest that it was the case. Although many women today are restricted in serving the "central" and "highest" meal of the church, the Eucharist, in Luke-Acts no such restrictions were placed on their ministry to Jesus at table, nor to his messengers. Arthur Sutherland in *I Was a Stranger*, is forthright and adamant that in the NT, "hospitality and the experience of women met together to produce one of the most radical movements ever to emerge in the Greco-Roman world".<sup>520</sup> Regarding the role of women in the emergence of the nascent church Sutherland notes that the importance of hospitality enabled women to enter "theological discourse and conflict".<sup>521</sup> Sutherland argues that the success of the missionary activity of the early church was in large part due to women. He adds that the historical and cultural reality of women being hosts within households means that attempts to reflect theologically on hospitality in the modern context must consider the experience of women.<sup>522</sup> This aligns with the arguments of Ch. 2 concerning the prominence and importance of women ministering in the mission of Jesus and the early church.

### **3.1. Distortions and Challenges of Hospitality**

While the philosophical and ethical dimension of hospitality have not been dealt with in this thesis, a few comments are in order. Philosopher Jacques Derrida proposed an

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<sup>519</sup> Finger, *Of Widows*, 281.

<sup>520</sup> Sutherland, *I Was a Stranger*, 42.

<sup>521</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

<sup>522</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

unconditionally open and indeterminate hospitality<sup>523</sup> that eschewed any attempts in placing limits or required conditions which would constrain hospitality.<sup>524</sup> Moreover, Derrida considered that the attitude of hospitality must remain utterly open, unconditionally and self-sacrificially giving to the other, regardless even of any violations the stranger may pose to one's offering of hospitality.<sup>525</sup> Derrida abhorred what he perceived as "violence" concerning the attempt to name, limit, define or control hospitality, for to do so is to miss the mark of pure hospitality. But this leaves hospitality out of reach and "tainted" in relation to everyday life. That is, in trying to leave the moment of hospitality utterly open and free of "violence", the first causality is in fact hospitality itself.

Hans Boersma challenges Derrida in the way he fails to acknowledge that hospitality is always limited to taking place within the confines of time and space, and that the unconditionally open hospitality proposed by Derrida, can in turn violate one's individual identity.<sup>526</sup> And as Steven Minister observes, hospitality requires defining some contours of the political, spiritual, emotional, and physical needs of the one offered hospitality.<sup>527</sup> There is a limit to what anyone can give to the other, but this does not need to empty hospitality of its truth and meaning as Derrida suggests. Moreover, Derrida's inability to countenance determinacy does place limits on attempts to practice actual hospitality in concrete forms such as eating together. Newlands and Allen highlight this conundrum posed by Derrida's impossible hospitality by pointing to the fact that power is inherent in hosting, as is some measure of control and ownership. Without such things, the offer of hospitality is impossible.<sup>528</sup> That is, an understanding of hospitality that has no substance and fails to manifest concretely, such as expression in meals, is not hospitality at all. Somatic beings

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<sup>523</sup> Jacques Derrida and Anne Dufourmantelle, *Of Hospitality: Anne Dufourmantelle Invites Jacques Derrida to Respond*, trans. Rachel Bowlby (Stanford University Press, 2000), 77.

<sup>524</sup> *Ibid.*, 135.

<sup>525</sup> Boersma, *Violence*, 30.

<sup>526</sup> *Ibid.*, 32-33.

<sup>527</sup> Stephen Minister, "Derrida's Inhospitable Desert of the Messianic: Religion within the Limits of Justice Alone," *Heythrop Journal* 48, no. 2 (2007): 239.

<sup>528</sup> Newlands and Smith, *Hospitable God*, 77 (emphasis authors').



depend on matter for survival, and often express welcome, love, and justice to one another through sharing food. In other words, “pure” hospitality is neither necessary nor desired; the motivations, determinations, and power of host or guest are secondary when at table. This is not to reject Derrida and the postmodern enterprise in totality; but only at the point of his engagement with the practice of hospitality.

Returning to practical concerns regarding hospitality, Shannon Jung’s book, *Food for Life*, provides a number of cautions for churches. Jung highlights the distortions of food and hunger that move away from biblical models of “delight and sharing” and manifest in obesity, eating disorders, malnutrition, and turn food consumption into a quasi-religion.<sup>529</sup> Jung also raises the spectre of global hunger, caused to some degree by inequitable global trade systems that disadvantage poorer nations and farmers. The world’s richest 15% consume 75% of the world’s energy thus entrenching an economic injustice that contributes to global hunger and leads to global food insecurity. Citing one theologian, Jung raises the question of complicity: “how can we theologically and morally tolerate a status quo in which the reality of one billion malnourished human beings is considered normal?”<sup>530</sup> Jung proposes that Christians have a public ministry to address such issues, and therefore, churches must embody the divine purposes of delight and sharing with regards to food and eating.<sup>531</sup> Concerning world hunger and malnutrition, Montoya envisages that part of the solution is a theological one. For Montoya, food matters “precisely because at the heart of the material – that is an entanglement of social, economic, cultural, and political realities – there is a theological realm, which is the co-abiding of divinity with humanity”.<sup>532</sup> He expands this practically to suggest that because at the centre of the church is the practice of table-fellowship, it is therefore incumbent that through sharing we participate with each

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<sup>529</sup> Jung, *Food for Life*, 57-74.

<sup>530</sup> *Ibid.*, 90.

<sup>531</sup> *Ibid.*, 129.

<sup>532</sup> Mendez Montoya, *Theology of Food*, 151.

other, the creation, and with God, in responding to the justice issues of hunger and poverty.<sup>533</sup>

Following on from some of the concerns Jung has alluded to, theologian Elizabeth Newman in her book, *Untamed Hospitality*, highlights four potential distortions of hospitality: sentimentality, privatization, marketing, and inclusivity. Concerning hospitality as a sentimental practice, the biblical witness by contrast presents hospitality as a robust and radical practice that aims “for truthful communion with God and others”.<sup>534</sup> Secondly, privatization defines hospitality as entertaining, focusing on “beautiful homes, delicious dinners, and polite conversation”, shared only with persons of similar status and class.<sup>535</sup> Such notions were implicit within the Greco-Roman banquet symposia as considered in Chapter 1, and may help to understand Luke’s rejection of the symposia as a model for Jesus’ meals with others. Thirdly, the commercialisation of hospitality sees it labelled an “industry” where time is something to be consumed rather than understood in relation to “history, tradition, or even personal relations”.<sup>536</sup> But Newman argues that hospitality within the Christian tradition is a mode of living that allows “our desires, tastes, and choices to be formed by the drama of God’s grace-filled kingdom in our midst”.<sup>537</sup> Finally, Newman contends that Christian hospitality is not necessarily equated with notions of diversity and inclusivity, though she admits, at first glance this may seem a strange assertion to make and that she is not advocating homogeneity or exclusiveness. Diversity and inclusivity, according to Newman, have become a type of “market hospitality” which is driven largely by aesthetic and consumerist notions, rather than by a discerning of the “good” inherent in a particular tradition. The importance of discerning the truly good in contrast to those things

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<sup>533</sup> Ibid.

<sup>534</sup> Elizabeth Newman, *Untamed Hospitality: Welcoming God and Other Strangers* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2007), 24.

<sup>535</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>536</sup> Ibid., 28.

<sup>537</sup> Ibid., 30.

that highlight human sinfulness is thus lost.<sup>538</sup> In this sense hospitality is just one other way in which consumers can consume otherness and difference, rather than an act that consciously discerns that which is good. Newman highlights the term coined by literary theorist Stanley Fish, “boutique multiculturalism”, as being that which places the universal over the particular to the extent that differences are glossed over, or ignored altogether to the extent where cultures and traditions are not evaluated or compared. Newman suggests that this faux inclusivity and diversity are market sanctioned to fuel consumerism and are devoid of faithful participation in being givers and receivers of God’s love and grace.

Turning to the issue of “otherness”, feminist theologian Letty Russell in *Just Hospitality*, suggested that hospitality is “the practice of God’s welcome reaching out across difference to participate in God’s actions bringing justice and healing in our world of crisis and our fear of the ones we call ‘other’”.<sup>539</sup> She advocates a *hermeneutic of hospitality* which seeks to explore “riotous difference” as God’s gift to the church, and also that hospitality can be expressed in unity, but this is not the same as uniformity. Hospitality enables communities to be cohesive places of difference that avoid the binary categories of “either/or,” “right/wrong,” “win/lose”.<sup>540</sup> Russell proposes the need to reframe hospitality from images of merely entertaining friends for meals or coffee and cake after church, and from associations of “terminal niceness”.<sup>541</sup> Instead, she advocates “just hospitality” and describes it as “a gift of God to us, one that we need to practice...Hospitality builds relationships across difference and in this way is a catalyst for community that is built out of difference”.<sup>542</sup> Luke reflects this issue of difference through the diversity of people Jesus eats at table with,

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<sup>538</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>539</sup> Letty M. Russell, *Just Hospitality: God’s Welcome in a World of Difference*, ed. J.S. Clarkson and K.M. Ott (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), 53. Letty Russell died in 2007 and this book is a bringing together of her lectures and research on hospitality, a book Russell longed to complete.

<sup>540</sup> Ibid., 65. Ogletree also notes the need for a “hermeneutics of hospitality” regarding reflection on Christian ethics. Ogletree, *Hospitality to the Stranger*, 119.

<sup>541</sup> Russell, *Just Hospitality*, 80.

<sup>542</sup> Ibid., 117.

such as “sinners” and Pharisees, and also by the way the church’s mission eventually includes Gentiles.

Discussion on otherness and difference raise the possibility of hospitality being more applicable for churches dialoguing with postmodern, secular and pluralistic societies, than is the notion of tolerance. In the attempt to find ways of dialogue through ethical disputes, and more specifically, how Christians are to engage and relate in a pluralistic society, Bretherton suggests that the practice of tolerance is less helpful than is the Christian practice of hospitality.<sup>543</sup> Bretherton does not dismiss tolerance, but argues that it is only through the rise of modernity that tolerance eclipsed hospitality as the preferred method of defining how Christians relate with others in areas of disagreement.<sup>544</sup> In addition, Bretherton believes

the motif of hospitality maintains the key eschatological tensions of Christian specificity. It does not force a harmony either through abstraction...Rather... it allows for Christians to retain their specific criteria for evaluating the veracity of moral claims, while at the level of moral practice experiencing both continuity and discontinuity with their neighbors.<sup>545</sup>

Bretherton argues that Christian hospitality is more advantageous than the secular virtue of tolerance, especially in navigating the moral diversity of our societies, and also in providing a framework for meaningful dialogue between opposing views. By contrast to tolerance with its advocating of mere acceptance and peaceful coexistence,

To warrant hospitality, the stranger neither has to be deserving in some way, nor do they have to earn the right to it, nor must they possess some innate capacity that renders them worthy of acceptance among the human community, nor is welcome dependant on a well-meaning humanitarian impulse on the part of the giver.”<sup>546</sup>

This aligns with what has just been said regarding mission. Christian communities can centre and organise themselves around the gospel of Jesus Christ, invite and welcome anyone to participate, and also contribute to meaningful dialogue in a gracious and accepting manner. How this might work out in practice requires creativity and imagination.

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<sup>543</sup> Bretherton, *Hospitality as Holiness*, 123.

<sup>544</sup> *Ibid.*, 125.

<sup>545</sup> *Ibid.*, 128.

<sup>546</sup> *Ibid.*, 149.

But the key point is that Christians have a significant tradition in the practice of hospitality that can provide the theological basis for navigating mission, as well as dialogue in a contemporary pluralistic and secular culture. And as Pohl has suggested, hospitality can be a lens through which we can consider “our homes, churches, jobs, schools, health care, and politics”.<sup>547</sup>

To finish this dialogical round-table, a recent book by Tim Chester, *A Meal with Jesus*, provides a number of scenarios of how the meals of Jesus in Luke’s Gospel are central to the mission of the church. Chester reflects on the meals of Jesus in Luke, as I have done, and finds a solid basis for creative approaches to church and mission. But it is his last point that I would like to include as it captures the heart of what this thesis has sought to express:

Everything else—creation, redemption, mission—is “for” this: that we might eat together in the presence of God. God created the world so that we might eat with him. The food we consume, the table around which we sit, and the companions gathered with us have as their end our communion with one another and with God. The Israelites were redeemed to eat with God on the mountain, and we’re redeemed for the great messianic banquet that we anticipate when we eat together as a Christian community. We proclaim Christ in mission so that others might hear the invitation to join the feast. Creation, redemption, and mission all exist so that this meal can take place.<sup>548</sup>

### **3.2. Personal Reflection**

I grew up in a home with a single-mother who was born in Australia to Greek-Cypriot immigrants. Both my mother and my grandmother (Yaya) were exceptional cooks and quintessential hosts. My Yaya’s house and my own home were frequently filled with people and delicious food, made through many hours of labouring. Cyprus is located within the region of the Mediterranean, and figures in the Bible (cf. Isa 23:1; Acts 13:4). The hospitality experienced through meals growing up was recently tasted in 2010 on Cypriot soil when I visited my family’s village, Trouilli. There I experienced the gracious and warm hospitality of extended family I had never met- and with many of whom I could not

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<sup>547</sup> Pohl, *Making Room*, 150.

<sup>548</sup> Tim Chester, *A Meal with Jesus: Discovering Grace, Community, and Mission around the Table* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2011), 138.

converse due my inability to speak Greek. This hospitality was expressed through warm welcome, but also through the customary on-going and generous provision of food and drink throughout the day. In this small village, the Orthodox Church loomed large in the centre and was filled in the morning with the majority of the villagers at Sunday worship. Food is embedded within the Orthodox tradition and feast days, fasting, and offerings of food such as *kollyva*<sup>549</sup> are offered by the family during the service. The *prosforo* (holy bread) has historically been prepared by women—often widows—and is used for feast days, communion, commemoration services for departed relatives, and also given to poorer members in the community. At Easter there are always boiled eggs dyed red symbolising Christ’s death, as well as *tsoureki* (sweet bread). On Easter Sunday each family gathering prepares a whole lamb to roast over hot coals, reminiscent of the Jewish Passover. Fasting is also central to Orthodox faith and over Lent only vegetable based foods are allowed, and there are hundreds of days in the year when an Orthodox Christian could fast. Always after church there will be lunch with family and friends. And always, it was the women of the family who did all the food preparation and cooking, except in a few areas, such as the roasting of meats over coals outside. My Yaya and my mother loved to feed people and they were exceptional at it.

In all my years of Greek weddings, baptisms, funerals, and family get-togethers, never once was there ever a lack of food. And within the context of the Mediterranean hospitality I have known, it is inconceivable that guests could be welcomed into a home without food and drink being offered. This would *never* happen. Sunday lunches flowed on into the afternoon with guests coming and going all day. Each time new guests arrived, new dishes appeared on the tables. Moreover, we *always* sat at the table, which was added to as needed to fit more guests. Although it would be “unscholarly” to extrapolate such personal experiences

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<sup>549</sup> A mixture of sweetened boiled wheat with spices and numerous other ingredients such as dried fruits, seeds, and nuts.

and foist them onto the 1<sup>st</sup> century churches, I can't but help think that the culture was similar.

So this thesis is in part an *apologia* for the women of my family, and the women down through the ages that have kneaded dough, peeled vegetables, cleaned fish, poached fruit, baked cakes, sautéed onions, stewed meats, boiled pasta, fried chicken, ground spices, chopped herbs, cleaned kitchens and scrubbed dirty dishes in order to make the world a more civilised, cultured, and hospitable place. Though our modern Western context has changed in many regards concerning traditional roles, and much of this for the better, cooks have historically been snubbed philosophically and theologically. The hospitality rooted within the Hebrew Bible, and the domestic meals of Jesus in Luke's Gospel, lead us to a greater appreciation of those who serve at table—including Jesus himself.

On that day HOLY TO THE LORD will be inscribed on the bells of the horses, and the cooking pots in the LORD's house will be like the sacred bowls in front of the altar. Every pot in Jerusalem and Judah will be holy to the LORD Almighty, and all who come to sacrifice will take some of the pots and cook in them (Zec 14:20-2).

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