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The Resonance of Eating and Drinking in Early Christianity and its Ancient Contexts

'In Gottesdiensten und religiösen Riten, etwa im Abendmahl oder beim Segen, verbinden sich mit der 'Erfahrung' vertikaler Tiefenresonanz sowohl *horizontale* Resonanzachsen zwischen den Gläubigen, die sich etwa im christlichen Kulturkreis in der „Kommunion“ als Gemeinde konstituieren, als auch *diagonale* Resonanzbeziehungen' (Rosa 2016, 443). Building on this sociological insight, the possible dissertation project will treat the questions: What are the elements of early Christian meals which provided the potential of resonance? What made the early Christian groups with their understanding of purity and dietary laws attractive in ancient urban contexts?

For instance, in contrast to other associations, it was possible for Christ-believers to attend ritual meals in other cities without being newly initiated into the local cult association. Baptism was obviously considered by early Christians as a one-time and universal initiation into the church, which was seen as a local and a universal entity. This view was probably established in the church of Antioch and further substantiated by its most prominent member, the Apostle Paul, in his theology of justification by faith in Jesus Christ.

Therefore, the letters of Paul (especially Galatians 2:11-21 in connection with Galatians 2:1-10; First Corinthians 8:11–11:1; Romans 14:1–15:13) will provide the central basis for the dissertation, although the apostle's contexts and dispositions (Jewish and Graeco-Roman meals, Jesus traditions [Mark 2:15-17; 7:1-23; Q 7:33-35; 11:39b, 41]) have to be investigated also. In addition, it should be asked which resonance axes constructed by Paul and his communities using ritual meals received active reception in later generations (1st and 2nd c. AD) and which not – and why.

While the religio-historical contexts of eating and drinking in Paul's communities has been intensively investigated (see for instance Eschner 2019; Heil 1994; Al-Suadi, Smit 2019), it remains a worthwhile project to do research on its social meanings. For instance, newer approaches using network theories seem to open up new understandings (see for instance Kloppenborg 2019).

References

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