Introduction

In recent scholarship on 1 Corinthians, the reconstruction of the Corinthian situation and Paul’s relationship to it is one of the most controversial issues. The identification of Paul’s ‘opponents’ in the Christian ekklēsia and the examination of the nature of sophia and logos as addressed particularly in 1 Corinthians 1-4, are especially significant issues for my purposes.

By the time Paul wrote 1 Corinthians, the Corinthian Christian ekklēsia had critical problems with schismata. The Corinthian congregation was divided into factions (e.g. 1 Cor 1:10-12; 2 Cor 12:20). The Pauline language of 1 Corinthians 1-4

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1 For the history of recent Pauline scholarship on 1 Corinthians see Edward Adams and David G. Horrell (eds), Christianity at Corinth: the Quest for the Pauline Church (Louisville; London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004).

2 By the word ‘opponents’ I mean those members in the Corinthian ekklēsia who Paul perceived as opposing him and/or the gospel he represented when he wrote 1 Corinthians. Here I agree with Chow’s conclusion that at this stage no false teachers from outside were in the Christian gatherings at Corinth (see John K. Chow. Patronage and Power: A Study of Social Networks in Corinth [Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992], 114; for a different perspective see D. Geogri, The Opponents of Paul in Second Corinthians [Edinburgh: T & T Clark; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986], 317).

3 I prefer to use the Greek word ‘ekklēsia’ here rather than the English word ‘church’ because the connotations it had in the time of the New Testament differ fundamentally from the meaning of the word ‘church’ today (see Ben Witherington III, Conflict & Community in Corinth: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; Carlisle: the Paternoster Press, 1995], xiii, n.11, 90-3). In the time of the NT the term ‘ekklēsia’ (or assembly), ‘derived from ek-kaleō (‘call out’, a verb used for the summons to an army to assemble),’ meant “the popular assembly of the full citizens of the polis, or Greek city state.” It was “clearly characterised as a political phenomenon: it was the assembly of all citizens, fundamentally rooted in the Greek democracy, an assembly in which political and juridical decisions were taken (cf. Acts 19. 39)” (Peter T. O’Brien, “Church” in GF. Hawthorne, R.P. Martin, and D.G. Reid [eds], Dictionary of Paul and His Letters [Illinois and Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 1993], 123-131, esp.123). Even in the days of Plato the word ‘ekklēsia’ was employed simply to refer to an assembly (Plato, “Gorgias” in B. Jowett [trans.], the Dialogue of Plato: vols 1-4 [2nd ed.] [Oxford: the Clarendon Press, 1875], 456) – a secular, especially political gathering of people, and did not mean a designated organization or society. Accordingly, it is likely that the word had no “intrinsically (or essentially) religious” connotations in NT times (O’Brien, “Church,” 124). Loveday Alexander also claims that while it still had a political connotation, the ekklēsia of the Christians provided a space for the activities of Christian teachers (Loveday Alexander, “Paul and the Hellenistic Schools: the Evidence of Galen” in Troels Engberg-Pedersen (ed.), Paul in His Hellenistic Context [Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1994], 60-83, esp. 80). It is not appropriate, therefore, that we uncritically use the word ‘church’ (invariably defined in dictionaries as a building for Christian worship) to translate ekklēsia.

4 Paul does not use the word christianos in 1 and 2 Corinthians. Indeed, it occurs only 3 times in the whole NT (Acts 11:26; 26:28; 1 Pe 4:16). The ‘Christian’ here refers to a person who believed in the Christ Paul preached at Corinth. It is used interchangeably with the phrase ‘Christ-believer’ and includes Jewish followers of Jesus as Messiah.
indicates that a number of broader cultural phenomena underlay these factions: the issues of *sophia* (1:17-2:16) and *logos sophias* (or *sophia logou*) (1:17; 2:4), social hierarchical structures and social stratification (1:26-28; 4:8-13; cf. 11:21-22; 12:13), and ethnic diversity (1:22-24; cf. 10:32; 12:13; 16:13-24). These factors seem to have been endemic in the social situation of the Corinthians to whom Paul wrote 1 Corinthians. As well as these broader issues, there are particular triggers of schisms found in the rest of the letters: immorality (5:1-12), litigation (6:1-11), marriage (7:1-40), idolatry (8:1-10:22), household cults (10:23-11:1), discrimination at the Lord’s Supper (11:17-34), spiritual gifts (12:1-14:40), and the nature of the resurrection body (15:1-58). A careful examination of the social and cultural environment of Roman Corinth where the Pauline community was founded, will shed light not only on the particular issues that arise out of it, but also on how understandings of wisdom, rhetoric and social relationships shape Christian responses to these issues. This type of analysis is particularly relevant for my reading of 1 Corinthians in a Korean-Confucian Christian context, where underlying philosophical and social assumptions also have profound influence on Christian communities.

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In addition to this focus on wisdom and rhetoric, I will argue that patronal structures were profoundly significant in shaping the social and cultural milieu of Roman Corinth. These patronal networks affected the behaviour of some of the Corinthian Christians as addressed in 1 Corinthians 1-4 (1:26-31; 4:6-7; cf. Rom 16:2), and these social networks are reflections of the web of rhetorical conventions that reinforced the power of the sophisticated elite in the wider Corinthian society.

Rhetorical handbooks and conventions in the Greco-Roman world had considerable impact on the mentality and social behaviour of the wider populace, including even Paul as he critiques them in 1 Corinthians 1-4. This is evidenced by the Pauline language of 1 Corinthians 1:10-4:21 which comprises multiple rhetorical elements. In these chapters, Paul frequently uses rhetorical terminology such as sophia and its equivalent sophos, and logos. Paul also employs distinctive phrases which are closely related to rhetorical strategies, such as sophia tou kosmou, sophia aiōnos, sophia logou, logos sophias, anthrōpivos sophia, and hē sophia anthrōpōn. Clearly, this text shows strong evidence that it contains a diversity of rhetorical elements.6

Because of such rhetorical elements and the social indicators recorded in 1 Corinthians 1-4, I will investigate the Pauline text primarily from social and rhetorical perspectives. These perspectives satisfy two major aims in this thesis: one is to reconstruct the rhetorical and social situation of 1 Corinthians 1-4. The other is to evaluate this reconstruction from a Korean-Confucian Christian context. In other words, this is an attempt to dialogue between the social and cultural milieu of the Christ-believing Corinthians in first century Greco-Roman culture and that of Korean

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6See 2.1 further below.
Christians in 21st century Korean-Confucian culture. It is especially significant to employ rhetorical analysis in such a project as this for two particular reasons.⁷

One is that rhetorical analysis is based on an audience-oriented interpretation, because the situation of the audience is understood as a primary concern to a writer or speaker. In that Paul’s letters are explicitly intended to be read aloud to the communities addressed (e.g. Rom 1:7; 1 Cor 1:2-3; 2 Cor 1:1-2), they can be analysed using rhetorical analysis as if Paul was speaking directly to the gathered community. The writer or speaker finds him/herself “obliged to speak at a given moment to respond appropriately to the situation” of the audience.⁸ This means that the writer, to a great extent, has to give his/her response to the current situation of the audience rather than simply to present his/her thoughts or theology. In rhetorical analysis, it is also assumed that the role of the audience is not passive but active in some sense. In other words, the audience is not simply seen as a group passively hearing the discourse, but also as those who in an active way are influenced by the discourse such


⁸Pogoloff, Logos and Sophia, 78.
that they take decisive action for change. From this it becomes apparent that in rhetorical analysis two points must be emphasised: the appropriate response of a writer or speaker to the current situation of the audience, and the audience’s participation in taking action for change.

While interpreting 1 Corinthians 1-4 using rhetorical analysis, therefore, we should keep in mind that the Pauline text is not just some kind of reflection of his thought or theology, but rather it is his response to the Corinthian situation, and particularly to the critical problem of schisms among the believers. Therefore, in order to urge the Corinthians to be reconciled in the crucified Christ he seeks to persuade them to take action to change their behaviour. Furthermore, rhetorical analysis is the appropriate method for this thesis because it helps turn the direction of my primary focus from a potential over-emphasis on the thought and theology of Paul, as indicated in the text, to the rhetorical and social situation of 1 Corinthians 1-4 and the wider Greco-Roman rhetorical and social culture with which the Corinthian audience identified themselves.⁹ That is why this method is called an audience-oriented perspective, and why we need to begin with an examination of the social and rhetorical situation of 1 Corinthians 1-4. In particular, we need to give full attention to the Corinthian audience’s understanding of such distinctive words as *sophia, logos, dynatos, eugenēs* (1:26), *kauchēma* (1:29, 31; 4:3), and *mimētēs* (4:16; 11:1) as a reflection and manifestation of their Greco-Roman rhetorical and social environment.¹⁰

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⁹This is helpfully and neatly expressed in the saying that the “rhetorical situation…allows us to move from the world of the text of Paul to the world of the Corinthian community without ever leaving the world of the reader” (Pogoloff, *Logos and Sophia*, 83).

¹⁰I would argue that this approach is helpful and relevant not only to biblical hermeneutics but also to homiletics, because it challenges preachers to focus their preaching on the appropriate response to the current situation of the audience rather than just on theological input.
The second major reason for the appropriateness of this approach is that when using rhetorical analysis we are also encouraged to dialogue between the Pauline text and the situation of the readers in our own time. Pogoloff claims that “a text which functions rhetorically in the original situation will continue to do so if a reader interprets it as addressing his/her attitudes or actions within the new situation.”11 This means that in the ongoing process of rhetorical analysis we can re-read the Pauline text in the eyes of our own situation – not in a naïve way, but informed by the rhetorical strategies and responses of the implied author and audience. In other words, for example, we may interpret wisdom as addressed in 1 Corinthians 1-4 in terms of rhetorical and social perspectives and then reflect on its interpretation in a Korean-Confucian Christian context for contemporary Korean readers in terms of a collective methodology of social, historical, and contextual approaches. It is important, therefore, that we attempt to dialogue between understandings of Corinthian wisdom (sophia) in the original rhetorical situation and understandings of Korean wisdom (jeehye or sulgi) in the Korean Confucian situation. In doing this, we bring together two distinctive cultures, the Corinthian culture in the first century Greco-Roman world and 21st century Korean Confucian culture. At the same time, we make the two horizons, the Pauline text and my current Korean-Confucian Christian context, meet and inform each other. In recent Pauline scholarship and especially Korean scholarship on 1 Corinthians, this obviously involves a re-reading of 1 Corinthians 1-4 that comprises an awareness of the social and rhetorical milieu of Corinth in the mid-first century Greco-Roman world, and explores possible analogies with contemporary Korean Christianity today. No Korean scholars, as far as I know, have

11 Pogoloff, Logos and Sophia, 80-1. Similarly, D. Flemming states, “in order for the Christian message to be meaningful to people it must come to them in language and categories that make sense within their particular culture and life situation. It must be contextualized” (Dean Flemming, Contextualisation in the New Testament: Patterns for Theology and Mission [Leicester: Apollos, 2005], 13; for case studies on 1 Corinthians see 182-213).
investigated wisdom traditions at Corinth as described in 1 Corinthians 1-4 in terms of a social and rhetorical method, nor have any attempted to dialogue between Corinthian wisdom (*sophia*) and Korean wisdom (*jeehye* or *sulgi*).\(^{12}\)

In recent Pauline scholarship, this sort of cross-cultural (or intercultural) hermeneutics of Paul has been advocated by scholars such as C.H. Cosgrove, H. Weiss, and K.K. Yeo. In their work *Cross-cultural Paul: Journeys to Others, Journeys to Ourselves*, these scholars use a ‘historical-critical approach’ because this approach, as they argue, helps the writers “distinguish Paul in his culture from (them) in (theirs).”\(^{13}\) They further state that “connecting Paul with our (the writers’) own

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Furthermore, Ik-Su Park tackles briefly the issue of wisdom as addressed in 1 Corinthians 1:18-24 in terms of a *sinhakjeok* (theological) approach and analyses the behaviour of Protestant Korean Christians in parallel with that of the Corinthians. Nevertheless, he doesn’t give much attention to the study of the social and rhetorical milieu of first century Corinth (Ik-Su Park, *Naga guyen cham grisooyin inga: Korindojeonseo* [Who are really Christians?: 1 Corinthians] [Seoul: Daehan Kidokkyo Seoseo, 2002]; see also http://sydneybookland.com/detail.php?code=1482, accessed on 28/06/2005).

In recent Korean scholarship on Paul’s epistles Johann D. Kim examines Romans 9-11 from a social and rhetorical perspective, although he doesn’t investigate the problems Paul addresses in 1 Corinthians 1-4 (J.D. Kim, *God, Israel, and Gentiles: Rhetoric and Situation in Romans 9-11* [SBLDS 176; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000]).

13Charles H. Cosgrove, Herold Weiss, and K.K. Yeo, *Cross-Cultural Paul: Journeys to Others, Journeys to Ourselves* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 272. In this book each of these writers provides “a chapter on Paul from his own cultural perspective (Anglo-American, Chinese, and Argentine respectively) and also a ‘cross-over’ chapter on Paul from a cultural perspective not his own (African American, Russian, and Native American)” (*Cross-Cultural Paul*, 5).

For an intercultural reading of 1 Corinthians from an African context see Dachollom Datiri, “1 Corinthians,” in Tokunboh Adeyemo (ed.), *African Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan; Nairobi: WorldAlive Publishers, 2006), 1377-98. Datiri uses a historical-critical exegetical method, and draws analogies between the problems Paul addresses in 1 Corinthians and those that African Christians face today. Based on this comparison, he critiques the latter from the perspective of Paul’s message in 1 Corinthians. For example, in reaction to the problem of divisions in the African church, Datiri comments, “In Africa, we frequently witness church divisions based on factors such as age, education, loyalty to the pastor. Such divisions are wrong, for God’s way of handling differences maintains unity of the body even as it addresses difficult issues” (“1 Corinthians,” 1379). Such an approach at least recognizes the importance of cross-cultural issues in biblical hermeneutics, but the
cultural settings...calls for analogical reasoning, finding ways to do fair comparison by noting similarities and differences." Their 'historical-critical' perspective enables readers to read Paul cross-culturally and explore analogies between the biblical contexts of his letters and their own cultural contexts in terms of theological and ecclesiological issues that might potentially apply in both contexts. But this is only part of the hermeneutical process required to read cross-culturally.

Sigurd Grindheim argues that such 'historical-critical' analysis alone cannot provide "the evaluations Paul would have given of cultures across the world" but is in danger of misleading readers into attempting to extract a 'pure' Pauline message from "the (Greco-Roman) cultural packaging with which Paul furnishes it" and to juxtapose it with issues and problems that contemporary readers face in their Christian lives. This is a good beginning to intercultural hermeneutics but does not go far enough.

I argue that in reading Paul's writings and especially 1 Corinthians cross-culturally, it is important to invite both Paul and his Corinthian audience to our dialogue table and let all parties continue to talk to each other and dialogue with me and my readers, 21st century Korean Christians. This is, so to speak, at least a four-party dialogue. The four parties – Paul, his Corinthian readers, myself, and the Korean church (with Cicero and T'oegye lurking in the background as cultural representatives; see further below) – ask different questions and give various suggested answers to the questions both forward and backward in time. In this regard, Cosgrove, Weiss, and Yeo correctly state that "people in different cultural settings do

tendency is to concentrate more on the cultural context surrounding the text in order to extract spiritual principles to apply today. The often 'invisible culture' of the reader is seen as the target of such principles rather than a dialogue partner in the process.

Cosgrove, Weiss, and Yeo, Cross-Cultural Paul, 272.

not simply give different answers to the same questions, they ask different
questions.”

So I would argue, nevertheless, that their more narrowly defined ‘historical-
critical’ approach doesn’t fit my primary concern to investigate the social and
rhetorical background of 1 Corinthians 1-4 in dialogue with Korean-Confucian
Christianity. In these chapters in particular, Paul demonstrates his message in reaction
to the Corinthian Christians’ behaviour that was, as I will argue, profoundly
influenced by Greco-Roman social and rhetorical conventions. Therefore, a special
emphasis on rhetorical and social approaches fits this investigation. I will then re-read
some of Paul’s critique of Greco-Roman culture within my Korean-Confucian
Christian context, and let the fourfold dialogue begin. For this, as I have mentioned
earlier, a collective methodology of social, sociological, historical, and contextual
approaches will be used, both of the biblical text and context, and to a lesser extent,
the Korean context.

It may seem that this thesis could be helpfully informed by the ‘postcolonial’
hermeneutics favoured by scholars in recent biblical scholarship. Such an approach
is indeed relevant for the second part of Chapter Four below: ‘Shinto Shrine
Worship’, where I will deal with the situation of Korean Christians who were
compelled to worship a Japanese emperor during Japanese imperialism from 1910-
1945. Japanese colonisation in Korea, however, was relatively short in comparison

16 Cosgrove, Weiss, and Yeo, Cross-Cultural Paul, 32.
17 For more details about this approach see Kwok Pui-lan, Postcolonial Imagination and Feminist
Theology (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2005); R.S. Sugirtharajah, The Bible and the Third
World: Precolonial, Colonial and Postcolonial Encounters (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,
2001).
18 The important question of ‘Comfort Women’ also can be regarded as an on-going post-colonial issue
in Korean society. During the Japanese occupation, the Japanese government recruited young single
Korean women by force and sent them as sex slaves to the battlefields where Japanese soldiers fought,
to entertain and cheer these soldiers. This issue can be connected, in a sense, to the problem of sexual
immorality at Corinth and the presence of on-going victims of abuse within the Christian community,
as addressed by Paul (1 Cor 5:1-13; 6:12-20; 11:2-16). Against Jennifer A. Glancy, who states that “the
to countries such as India and the Philippines. The 35 years of Japanese colonisation was not long enough for Japanese culture to penetrate so profoundly into Korean culture. That is why I argue that this ‘postcolonial’ perspective doesn’t fit my investigation of the fundamental influences on the behaviour and mentality of Korean Christians today – namely, Confucianism. If accepted in biblical scholarship, a ‘post World-War-II’ approach would be more relevant to the social and political situation of the Korean peninsula where the ongoing issue of the reunification between the two Koreas is crucial among all Koreans, whether Christian or non-Christian today.

Moreover, the perspective of liberation theology and Minjung theology doesn’t fit my interest in this thesis either. Certainly liberation-theology and Minjung-theology approaches are useful for interpreting the social and political environment of Korean Christians who were oppressed and persecuted during the times of Japanese occupation (1910-1945), the Korean War (1950-1953), and the dictatorship of military governments in South Korea (1960s-1992) and in North Korea now. But Minjung theology has gradually become an out-of-date theology in Korean Christianity today. It has lost its cutting edge in the spiritual atmosphere of 21st century Korean Christianity where (sadly) there seems to be more interest in individual spiritual welfare and church growth than in social justice and political issues. Minjung theology first came out of the socially, economically, and politically difficult situation of South Korea in the 1960s-80s, right after the Korean War. So it embraced the grief, sorrow, and suffering of Korean Christians in those days. During

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19 India was colonised by the British for about 200 years and the Philippines was occupied by the Spanish for about 370 years and then ruled by the United States for about 40 years.

20 For more details on Minjung theology see 4.2 further below.
this period, Koreans grieved over the loss of loved ones in the Korean War and over
the division of the Korean peninsula into two countries. They suffered economically
from extreme poverty and were politically oppressed under the dictatorship of former
military governments. Many Koreans fought against these governments for freedom,
human dignity, and democracy.21 This was called the ‘democratisation movement’ in
which Minjung theologians such as Byong-Moo Anh and Ik-Hwan Moon were
actively involved and took leadership roles.

Nonetheless, Minjung theology doesn’t attract the attention of many Korean
Christians today. In the last two decades (late 1980s to early 2000s), South Korea has
changed quickly in terms of social, economic, and political structures. Korean society
became globalised and individualised and influenced more by Western life patterns.
The Korean economy has grown so rapidly that no Koreans complain about a
shortage of food and shelter any more. Democracy is widespread all over South
Korea. Not many Koreans have great interest in issues of social justice and human
rights. This distinctive change in Korean society over the last few decades has heavily
influenced the lives of Korean Christians. Korean churches have become mega
churches in terms of growth and finance and now send a good number of missionaries
overseas. The success of such churches tends to be measured by numerical growth.
Christians prefer to move from small churches to larger churches to share in the
benefits of their social success. Prosperity theology appears to replace Minjung
theology. Wealthier Korean Christians tend to project their social position and
privilege into churches and claim leadership positions.

21Jinseoung Woo reads the Bible and particularly Titus, Romans, and Psalms from the social situation
of the military dictatorships and his imprisonment experience during this time (see Jinseong Woo,
“Reading the Bible from a Social Location: A Response” in Robert L. Brawley [ed.], Character Ethics
Press, 2007], 169-176). This is still a powerful contextual reading and essential for understanding the
Korean church, but already it relates more to a reconstruction of the past rather than addressing the
present context.
It is an important part of this thesis to investigate the profound causes of such mentality and behaviour among Korean Christians and to evaluate it in the light of Corinthian behaviour and Paul’s reaction to it as addressed in 1 Corinthians 1-4. I will argue that aspects of such behaviour are strongly influenced by Korean Confucianism that has deeply penetrated the life of Korean society for a long time, in a way that is analogous to how the conduct of some of the Corinthian Christians was affected by Greco-Roman social and rhetorical conventions. The analogy is imperfect and messy, but a rich one to explore because of the multiple levels on which it operates.

In order to reconstruct the rhetorical and social situation of 1 Corinthians 1-4 and evaluate this reconstruction from a contemporary Korean-Confucian Christian context, I will focus on two proponents of wisdom most representative of the wider culture in each context. I propose that Cicero (106-43 BCE) and his rhetorical handbooks comprise the best example of the thinking that influenced, to some extent, the behaviour and mentality of the Corinthians in the mid-first century Greco-Roman world. Though he lived in the Roman Republic of the first century BCE,\(^\text{22}\) it is neither possible nor necessary to argue a direct connection between Cicero, Corinth and Paul. Rather, as the greatest exponent of the Romanisation of Greek wisdom in his world and for long after, he best encapsulated the kind of rhetoric and boasting that Paul encountered and critiqued in the Roman colony of Corinth.

In a similar way, I will use T’oegye (1501-1570) and his Confucian thought as one of the most influential foundation stones for the mentality of contemporary Koreans, though he lived in the 16\(^{\text{th}}\) century CE.\(^\text{23}\) It is necessary for me to use Cicero and T’oegye to embody wisdom thought in this way to avoid an exhaustive overview of Greco-Roman and Korean wisdom traditions. It also serves to sharpen the dialogue

\(^{22}\)For more details on Cicero see 2.1 further below.
\(^{23}\)For more details on T’oegye see Appendix 2.
to follow by focussing it as a discussion between the implied Cicero, Paul and T'oegye in the social and rhetorical contexts of Corinth and Korea. For these reasons I will briefly outline the thought of these two paradigms of wisdom, as a basis for later reflections.\textsuperscript{24}

Recent Pauline scholars sometimes refer to Cicero’s writings and letters to understand the social and rhetorical background of 1 Corinthians.\textsuperscript{25} Yet none of them specifically employs Cicero’s rhetorical handbooks, as recorded in his \textit{De Inventione}, to reconstruct the social and rhetorical situation of 1 Corinthians 1-4 or to defend the position that this Pauline text as a whole is a rhetorical unit. None of them points out that his rhetorical handbooks – owing much to Aristotle and Isocrates – may have influenced, to some degree, the mentality and behaviour of the Corinthians in the first century CE.\textsuperscript{26} None of them finds explicit similarities between Cicero’s understandings of wisdom (\textit{sapientia}) and eloquence (\textit{eloquentia}), as depicted in his \textit{De Oratore}, \textit{De Inventione}, and \textit{De Officiis}, and some of the Corinthians’ understandings of wisdom (\textit{sophia}) and eloquence (\textit{logos}) as addressed in 1 Corinthians 1-4. Moreover, none of them claims that the way Cicero had boasted (\textit{gloriatur}) and had encouraged the Romans to imitate (\textit{imitator}) his rhetorical traditions, was analogous to the way the Pauline ‘opponents’ boasted and urged other Corinthian Christians to imitate them. These approaches were in turn subverted

\textsuperscript{24}For more details on Cicero and T’oegye see 2.1 and Appendix 1 and 2.

\textsuperscript{26}Though as Litfin indicates, “his life-span brackets the time of Paul,” (Litfin, \textit{Paul’s Theology of Proclamation}, 88).
explicitly by Paul (kauchaomai, 1 Cor 1:29, 31; 4:3; mimēomai, 1 Cor 4:16; 11:1). In
this thesis, such arguments will be a significant part of the analysis of the Corinthian
situation.

I will argue that the influence of Cicero’s legacy of rhetoric is revealed in the
language of Paul in 1 Corinthians 1-4. Cicero’s theories of rhetoric are glimpsed in
Paul’s use of rhetoric in his own writing, and particularly in 1 Corinthians 1-4. Here
Paul employs and subverts some of the rhetorical elements that Cicero suggested in
his rhetorical handbooks. This is attested in the fact that there are similarities between
the language of Cicero in De Officiis, De Oratore, and De Inventione, and that of Paul
in 1 Corinthians 1-4 – despite Cicero’s use of Latin. It is not difficult, for example, to
see parallels between the way Cicero had boasted (gloriatur) and the way some of the
Corinthian Christians boasted which is inversely related to Paul’s ironic ‘boasting’
(e.g. 1 Cor 1:28; 5:6; 9:15, 16; 15:31; cf. 2 Cor 11:18, 21; 12:1). I suggest that just as
Corinthians in the broader civic society imitated Cicero and others, so some members
of the Corinthian congregation took them as their model rather than the way of Christ
and Paul, and imitated Cicero in the way he had encouraged the Romans to imitate
their ancestors (e.g. 1 Cor 4:1, 16). These patterns of social behaviour were in turn
subverted explicitly by Paul in 1 Corinthians 1-4. It is a major task of my thesis to
explore the background of these words and of Corinthian wisdom, and their relation to
schismata in the Corinthian congregation as recorded in 1 Corinthians 1-4.

I will also argue that Cicero’s legacy of wisdom and eloquence influenced the
social behaviour of the Corinthians, and their social and worldly understandings of
wisdom. Moreover, Cicero’s legacy can be seen in the mentality and conduct of some
of the Corinthian Christians as addressed in 1 Corinthians 1-4. Some (but “not many”)
of the Corinthian Christians were, according to worldly standards, wise, wealthy,
powerful, and of noble birth (see 1 Cor 1:26). They continued to express their wealth, high social status, and patronal hierarchies within the Christian community (e.g. 9:1-27; 11:22). They understood the Christian εκκλησία to be more of a sort of social club (collegia) where patron-client systems played a vital role in interconnecting between patrons and clients of various social levels within the collegia (8:1-10:22; 15:29). Furthermore, they valued social and worldly understandings of wisdom and eloquence more highly than Christ crucified as the wisdom of God (1:18-3:22), according to Paul. Such attitudes caused divisions (schismata) in the Corinthian Christian community (1:10-13; 11:17-19).

In order to comprehend the problem of schismata and the nature of sophia that Paul addresses in 1 Corinthians 1-4, I will also undertake a social analysis and investigate carefully the following questions: What ethnic groups in particular existed in the Corinthian congregation? What social classes did the Corinthian Christians belong to? How many major parties existed in the Corinthian Christian community? Who played an influential and leading role in opposing and criticising Paul at Corinth? What particular points did Paul’s ‘opponents’ argue about with him?

I am not intending to adopt a sociological or social-science approach in this thesis, though I do make use of the results of those studies in some places. Rather than using sociological modelling, I am operating more in the area of applied social theory. That is, I aim to focus on the social and cultural manifestations of that which is valued most in Corinthian society – that which shapes the daily lives of ‘ordinary’ or ‘common’ people. Again, whereas philosophy and religion were undoubtedly profoundly important in shaping Greco-Roman city life, I do not intend to add to the significant studies already undertaken in this area.27

27See Mark Strom, Reframing Paul: Conversations in Grace and Community (Downers Grove:
Rather, I aim to focus on popular culture and the powerful influence of patriarchal hierarchies (particularly the patronal system) and the ‘popular wisdom’ that supported them (particularly as shown in speech-making and public rhetoric). I do this by asking how Paul’s first letter to Corinth would have been heard at a public reading in such a context. I will not attempt to describe all the variations on the methods of rhetorical analysis in Biblical exegesis today, since my interest is in the earliest hearers of the letter and how such a reconstruction (with all its uncertainties and imaginative re-creations) might inform the Korean hearers of the Corinthian correspondence today. So my approach is social and rhetorical, and attempts to span two very different (but surprisingly similar) cultures nearly two thousands years apart.

Furthermore, Corinthian understandings of wisdom (sophia) and eloquence (logos), and other social and rhetorical indicators addressed in 1 Corinthians 1-4 will be investigated, then any insights will be re-read in light of a Korean-Confucian Christian context, especially in parallel with Korean Confucian wisdom (jeehye or sulgi), in shaping which T’oe-gye played an important role. It is not surprising, then, that I, as a Korean-Confucian Christian, should attempt to read and interpret the biblical message from the perspective of my own Korean-Confucian Christian context. As part of such an attempt, I will try to examine from a Korean-Confucian Christian context the Corinthian wisdom and the rhetorical and social situation of mid-first century Corinth as indicated in 1 Corinthians 1-4. In particular, the cultural manifestations of wisdom traditions that become evident in relation to imperial cults, domestic ancestor cults, social hierarchies, and ethnic identity, are particularly fruitful areas of dialogue between the Korean-Confucian Christian context and Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians. Reflections on these areas constitute a major part of the final

InterVarsity Press, 2000), 103-41; Winter, Philo and Paul, 180-255; Welborn, Paul, the Fool of Christ, 44-250.
chapter of this thesis, but firstly, I now turn to a critical review of recent scholarship on the problems Paul addresses in 1 Corinthians 1-4.