Chapter Three

A Rhetorical and Social analysis of 1 Corinthians 1-4

This section focuses the results of my analysis of the rhetorical and social milieu of Roman Corinth and explores their influence on the mentality and conduct of the Corinthian Christians, as evident within 1 Corinthians and 1-4. I will pay particular attention to the Corinthian Christians’ attitude towards wisdom and eloquence, and the impact of patronal networks on the life of the Corinthian congregation. These will all be examined in close relation to the problem of schismata in the Corinthian Christian communities.

3.1 An Analysis of Rhetorical Conventions as Indicated in Corinthians 1-4

The focus of our rhetorical analysis will be an investigation of the issues of Corinthian wisdom, eloquence, and boasting addressed in 1 Corinthians 1-4. There were all characteristic of Greco-Roman rhetorical conventions and seem to have influenced the mentality and behaviour of the Corinthian believers. We begin with an examination of Corinthian wisdom and eloquence.

3.1.1 Corinthian Wisdom and Eloquence

It is my contention that the high value accorded to wisdom and eloquence by the Corinthians, as indicated in 1 Corinthians 1-4, was grounded in Greco-Roman rhetorical traditions, especially as typified in Cicero’s rhetorical handbooks. In
arguing this case, it is helpful to explore the similarities between elements of Greco-Roman rhetorical conventions as exemplified in the language of Cicero, and those reflected in Paul’s usage (both positively and negatively expressed) in 1 Corinthians 1-4.1 Again it must be said that I am not arguing for a direct link between Paul and Cicero – that is neither necessary nor possible – but rather for the appropriateness of using Cicero as the best example of the rhetorical influences shaping the Roman colony of Corinth.

Wisdom appears to be a slogan in the Corinthian Christian community. Some of the Corinthian Christians were enthralled by wisdom ( Sophia) and its verbal expression ( Sophia Logou). This is clearly evident in the Pauline language of 1 Corinthians 1-4. Here, Paul uses the Greek word Sophia and its equivalent Sophos 26 times – far more than anywhere else in his writings.2 He also employs the related phrases Sophia Logou and Logoi Sophiais 3 times (1:17; 2:1, 4; cf. Logos Sophiais in 12:8).3 Furthermore, Paul contrasts ‘wisdom of God’ ( Sophia tou theou) with ‘wisdom

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1 The questions of Paul and Sophia, whilst not completely resolved, have been more than adequately handled in recent scholarship (see Litfin, Paul’s Theology of proclamation, 109-262; Given, Paul’s True Rhetoric, 83-137; Strom, Reframing Paul, 180, 190-95). Therefore, this thesis attempts to explore the social implications of rhetorical elitism and their influence on some of the Corinthian Christians as indicated in 1 Corinthians 1-4.

2 See 1:17, 19 (twice), 20 (twice), 21 (twice), 22, 24, 25, 26, 27, 30; 2:1, 4, 5, 6 (twice), 7, 13; 3:10, 18 (twice), 19 (twice), 20.

3 The translation of the phrase Sophia Logou or Logoi Sophiais varies scholar by scholar: the RSV translates it as “eloquent wisdom” (1:17) “lofty words or wisdom” (2:1) or “plausible words of wisdom” (2:4). The JNT renders it as “mere rhetoric” (1:17), “surpassing eloquence or wisdom” (2:1) or “compelling words of ‘wisdom’” (2:4). The NIV reads it as ”words of human wisdom” (1:17), “eloquence or superior wisdom” (2:1) or “wise and persuasive words” (2:4). BAGD interprets it as “cleverness in speaking” (BAGD, 759; also Pogoloff, Logos and Sophia, 111). Thiselton suggests the translation “clever rhetoric” (1:17), “high-sounding rhetoric or a display of cleverness” (2:1), “enticing words” (2:4) (Thiselton, First Corinthians, 146, 208, 218). Collins proposes the translation “cleverness of speech” (1:17), “rhetoric or wisdom” (2:1), “persuasive words of wisdom” (2:4) (Collins, First Corinthians, 85, 118, 119). Pogoloff describes Sophia Logou as “clever or skilled or educated or rhetorically sophisticated speech” (Pogoloff, Logos and Sophia, 110). Clearly, there is a wide range of scholarly interpretation of the phrase Sophia Logou. Nonetheless, such translations all indicate that the phrase Sophia Logou is related to rhetoric, which Plato and Aristotle alike defined as ‘the art of persuasion’ (see Plato, Gorgias, 453-4; Aristotle, Rhetoric 1: 1 1355a21; 1355b8-10; 1:2: 1355b27-28). Fee also agrees that it is “characterised by rhetoric (perhaps reason or logic)” (Fee, First Corinthians, 64).

In this thesis I use ‘eloquence’ as the translation of the phrase Sophia Logou and its equivalent logos for the following reasons: the word logos recorded in the writings of Plato and Aristotle is
of the world’ (sophia tou kosmou) (1: 18-25, 2:1-13, 3:18-23). Clearly, Paul describes the ‘wisdom of God’ as Christ crucified (1:23, 24), yet he does not tell us specifically what he means by the ‘wisdom of the world’. Paul does, however, use the words ‘wisdom of the world’ interchangeably with the phrases ‘human wisdom’ (sophia anthrōpōn, 2:5, 13; cf. sophia sarkikos in 2 Cor 1:12) and ‘wisdom of this age’ (sophia tou aiōnos, 2:6).

At a glance, by using such words and phrases, Paul seems to criticise some of the Corinthian Christians who were particularly “wise,” “powerful,” and “of noble birth,” “according to worldly standards” (1:26). They appear to have preferred the wisdom of the world (sophia tou kosmou) and ‘human wisdom’ (sophia anthrōpōn) to Christ crucified as the wisdom of God (sophia tou theou) (1:20, 21; 2:6-8, 13; 3:18, 19) in Paul’s eyes. Paul accuses them of liking eloquent speech or eloquence (sophia logou) more than the gospel message Paul had preached (ho logos mou kai to kērygma mou) (1:17; 2:1, 4). He charged them with boasting of the wisdom, eloquence, wealth, power, and high social status they possessed in the wider Corinthian civic society rather than Christ Jesus as the wisdom of God (1:29-31; 4:7, 19).

If we collect together the implied critique by Paul of those whom he sees as misrepresenting the gospel and perhaps Paul himself, we reach the following conclusions. Some of the Corinthians to whom Paul refers in 1:26 played an

frequently translated as ‘speech’ or ‘eloquent speech’ in English literature (see Plato, Phaedrus 268; Aristotle, Rhetoric 1:2 1358a36-3 1359a29). Cicero also frequently uses the word eloquentia in his Latin books such as De Inventione (see 2.1). The Latin word eloquentia has the same connotation as the Greek word logos in Aristotle’s language, meaning ‘eloquent speech’ or ‘eloquence’.

Scholars, such as John P. Heil and H.H. Drake Williams III, claim that Paul criticised the Corinthian preference for worldly wisdom through his use and interpretation of early Jewish literature and Old Testament prophets. Williams argues for echoes of Old Testament prophets in 1 Cor 1-4, for example, an echo of Isaiah 28-33 in 1 Cor 1:8-25, of Jeremiah 9:22-23 in 1 Cor 1:26-31, of Zechariah 4:6 in 1 Cor 2:3-5, and of Isaiah 64:3 in 1 Cor 2:6-11 (H.H. Drake Williams, III. The Wisdom of the Wise: The Presence and Function of Scripture within 1 Cor. 1:18-3:23 [Leiden; Boston; Köln: Brill, 2001], 47-208). Similarly Heil argues that the Pauline language in 1 Cor 1:19 is a reflection of his interpretation of Isaiah 29:14b, that in 1 Cor 2:9 is of Isaiah 64:3, and that in 3:19b-20 is of Job 5:13a and Psalms 93:11 (John Paul Heil. The Rhetorical Role of Scripture in 1 Corinthians [Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005], 17-36, 53-67, 77-88).
influential and leading role in opposing and criticising Paul at Corinth. They were the same people whom Paul describes as “these arrogant people” in 4:18-19. In such verses, Paul suggests that these Corinthians were not keen for Paul to visit the Corinthian Christians, after he had left the city. Nonetheless, we now have a question still to be answered. What particular points did these ‘arrogant’ Corinthian Christians and Paul argue about? This question should be answered in light of the social and cultural milieu of first century Corinth. Against the background I have described, two points seem to stand out in Paul’s mind: 1. Paul devalued their social and cultural understandings of wisdom (sophia) and eloquence (sophia logou) (e.g. 1 Cor 1:17-3:23; 2 Cor 10:1-11:6). 2. Paul refused to establish ‘normal’ patron-client relationships with them and did not accept their financial patronage (e.g. 1 Cor 9:3-23; 2 Cor 11:7-11). 5

The majority of Paul’s implied Corinthian ‘opponents’ possessing wealth and high social status, as argued earlier, were the Roman elite in the Corinthian Christian ekklēsia. They would have had frequent contacts with the group of full Roman citizens at clubs and associations (collegia) in the wider civic community. Moreover, after Paul had left Corinth, they would have brought into the Christian community elements of the social and cultural phenomena of the first century Greco-Roman world, including the social and rhetorical understandings of wisdom and eloquence. 6

It is a reasonable assumption, therefore, that some of the Corinthian Christians and Paul’s implied Corinthian ‘opponents’ were influenced, to some degree, by Greco-Roman rhetorical traditions, as typified by Cicero’s legacy of wisdom (sapientia) and eloquence (eloquentia). 7

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5The second point will be analysed in 3.2 further below.
6See 2.1 above;
7The process of mutual influence between individuals and groups within society can be informed by the methods of social psychology. This sort of study includes “how groups affect individual people and
For instance, the way that Cicero relates wisdom to wealth and rulers is similar to the attitude that some of the Corinthians and Paul’s implied Corinthian ‘opponents’ had towards wisdom within their Christian community. Paul describes these Corinthians according to worldly standards, as wise, wealthy, powerful, and of noble birth (see 1 Cor 1:26). They continued to express their wealth in the Christian community (e.g. 11:22). Paul argues that they also valued social and worldly understandings of wisdom, especially the wisdom of the rulers of their age (2:6), and eloquence more highly than Christ crucified as the wisdom of God and the gospel message Paul preached (1:18-3:22).

Furthermore, some of the Corinthian Christians praised those people who possessed wisdom and eloquence. They may well have considered wisdom and eloquence as hallmarks of a high level of rhetorical ability and as indicating education, wealth, and high social status (e.g. 1 Cor 1:18-26; 2:1-4; 2 Cor 10:10). At this time, Dio Chrysostom urged people of wealth and high social class to have training in eloquence and to devote themselves to wisdom for their public career and social influence. He states,

That a man…who possesses great wealth and has every opportunity to live in luxury by day and night, should in spite of all this reach out for education also and be eager to acquire training in eloquent speaking (tō logō)...seems to me to give proof of an extraordinarily noble soul and not only ambitious, but in very truth devoted to wisdom (sophia). You, as it seems to me, are altogether wise in believing that a statesman needs experience and training in public speaking and in eloquence (logos). For it is true that this will prove of very great help toward making him beloved and influential and esteemed instead of being looked down upon…The man who intends to have a public career…should increase…the effectiveness of his oratory…Among the foremost historians I place Thucydides…for not only is there a rhetorical quality in the
narrative portion of his speeches, but he is not without eloquence. This statement indicates that wisdom and especially eloquence were of importance for people who possessed wealth and high social status, and who desired to have influential and powerful positions in their civic society in the first century CE. It is no wonder, then, that some of the Corinthian Christians of wealth and high social status understood *sophia* and *sophia logou* as social and cultural conventions, insisted on them, and regarded them highly, just as their contemporaries in the wider Corinthian civic society.

The problem such people caused in the Christian communities was, however, that they brought the social and cultural understandings of wisdom and eloquence into the mixed Christian communities. They were shaped more by these understandings than Christ as the wisdom of God and the gospel message. So Paul sharply criticises these Corinthians’ attitude towards *sophia* and *sophia logou* in 1 Corinthians 1-4. He therein appears to argue against them with rhetorical skill and subtlety, even though he claims not to have any himself (see 1 Cor 1:17; 2:1-4). This is particularly evident in Paul’s words: “the word of the cross is folly (*mōria*) to those who are perishing” (1:18); “has not God made foolish (*mōrainō*) the wisdom of the world?” (1:20); “the wisdom of this world is folly with God” (3:19). In these verses Paul uses exaggeration and irony to challenge his Corinthian audience to reconsider their understandings of wisdom and their relationship to worldly wisdom. They wouldn’t be in the Christian *ekklēsia* if they really thought the cross of Christ was foolish. So these words appear to be an attempt by Paul to sharpen the boundaries between

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9 Dio Chrysostom, *Discourse: On Training for Public Speaking*, 18.1, 2, 9, 10. This is quite similar to Cicero’s ideas about wisdom and eloquence, and Dio Chrysostom seems to have been influenced by Cicero’s legacy. This is further evidence that Cicero’s legacy had an ongoing impact on Greek-speaking people in the first century Greco-Roman world.

10 Paul uses the words *mōria* and *mōrainō* frequently. These words occur 6 times in 1 Corinthians 1-4 (1:18; 20, 21, 23; 2:14; 3:19) out of 9 times in the entire New Testament.
insiders and outsiders – between ‘Christ-ones’ and ‘worldly-ones’ – so that the un-
named ‘opponents’ might reconsider their position.

Furthermore, from Paul’s perspective, these Corinthian Christians regarded the
Greco-Roman rhetorical legacy of wisdom and eloquence as their cultural pattern,
rather than the model of Christ and Paul, under the influence of their contemporaries
with whom they had contacts at clubs and associations in the wider Corinthian civic
society. They boasted (kauchaomai) of the wisdom and eloquence they possessed in
terms of social and cultural influence (e.g. 1:29; 3:21; 4:7). They urged other
Corinthian Christians to imitate (mimētēs) in the way that Cicero had boasted
(gloriatur) about his eloquence and his influence in Roman society, and had urged the
Romans of his time to imitate (imitator) their ancestors.12

Moreover, they underestimated Paul, the founder of the Corinthian Christian
community, because he did not follow the elitist patterns and models of the wealthy
and because he did not value rhetorical skills in the same way in his preaching of the
gospel message (1:17; 2:1-4; 2 Cor 11:6). They thus understood him as not possessing
rhetorical skills that would compare favourably with those of his contemporary
rhetoricians and sophists.13 In recent Pauline scholarship, there is a growing
consensus that during his ministry at Corinth Paul did not mimic the rhetorical
eloquence and social habits of high Corinthian society, although he employed
“accepted rhetorical forms” in his writings, and especially in 1 Corinthians 1-4 (“his
letters are weighty and strong,” 2 Cor 10:10).14 That is why, as Fee argues, Paul’s

11 See 2.2.3 above.
12 For Cicero’s ideas on boasting see 2.1 above. I will examine the issue of boasting in detail further
below.
13 For the existence of rhetoricians and sophists in first century Corinth see Dio Chrysostom, Discourse
8.9; also Murphy O’Connor, Paul’s Corinth, 100.
14 Witherington, Conflict, 123.
preaching appeared to lack “rhetoric and wisdom.”¹⁵ Litfin claims that Paul had “pronounced rhetorical deficiencies in his preaching,”¹⁶ and Given also comments that “Paul would not present his gospel rhetorically” for certain reasons.¹⁷ There are three possible reasons for this. The first reason is that Paul did not indeed possess good abilities in speaking. Paul himself confessed that he was unskilled in speaking (tō logō) (2 Cor 11:6). Paul’s lack of rhetorical skills in speech is also attested in the Corinthians’ words, “his speech (is) of no account” (RSV) or “his speaking amounts to nothing” (NIV) (2 Cor 10:10). Of course, this humble confession by Paul could itself be a rhetorical ploy.

Secondly, Paul was afraid that if he had preached the gospel with eloquence, he would have distorted the gospel and have distracted the Corinthians from “the real power of the gospel message” whose essence is Christ crucified as the wisdom of God (1 Cor 2:5).¹⁸ Clearly, after Paul’s departure, there were in Roman Corinth others (perhaps including Apollos) who preached and lived in a way that compromised the gospel Paul had preached (see Acts 18:24-6). They used eloquence in their preaching and mimicked the cultural and rhetorical customs that the contemporary sophists and rhetoricians practised (see below). They wished to be recognised as competitive teachers who had rhetorical skill, and who were supported financially by patrons in the Christian communities. Some of the Corinthian Christians then accepted the distorted gospel which resulted from the way the ‘opponents’ lived and preached. That gospel differed from Paul’s gospel in which Christ crucified as the wisdom of God (sophia tou theou) was the focus of “boasting” (kauchaomai) (e.g. 1 Cor 1:31; 2 Cor 10:17; 11: 3-4).

¹⁵Fee, First Corinthians, 95.
¹⁶Litfin, Paul’s Theology of Proclamation, 170.
¹⁷Given, Paul’s True Rhetoric, 99 n.58.
¹⁸Witherington, Conflict, 123.
The last reason that can be given for Paul’s avoidance (or subversion) of rhetorical prowess is that he deliberately preached the gospel message relying on a “demonstration of the Spirit and power” of God rather than by using human wisdom, eloquence and persuasive (or enticing) words of wisdom (sophia logou) (1 Cor 2:1-9). Consistent with this, Paul also deliberately intended to make the gospel free of charge and free of patronal obligations in his preaching (1 Cor 9:18). This behaviour was distinct from other contemporary teachers, sophists, and rhetoricians. In the time of Paul, sophists and rhetoricians advertised themselves as teachers of great ability in rhetorical conventions and earned a living from their patrons. In this manner, they were recognised by people of the city. They even competed among themselves to obtain students and train them in their schools. First century teachers charged “exceedingly high fees.”19 It was usual that a teacher, on first arriving in a city, advertised himself “by sending out invitations indicating the time and place where he would present his credentials and declaim. At the appointed hour he addressed the gathered assembly.”20 In this address, he talked of his academic qualifications and career, and of his good character in order to make the audience trust him. Afterwards, he invited the audience to nominate a topic. He then spoke on the topic, and demonstrated his rhetorical skills and especially his eloquence.21

19 Winter, After Paul Left, 36. Dio Chrysostom witnessed the atmosphere of competition amongst sophists in first century Roman Corinth. He visited the city in between 89-96 CE. He describes that “…one could hear crowds of wretched sophists around Poseidon’s temple shouting and reviling one another, and their disciples, as they were called, fighting with one another …” (Dio Chrysostom, Discourse 8.9; also Murphy O’Connor, Paul’s Corinth, 100).
20 Winter, After Paul Left, 36.
21 Winter, After Paul Left, 36. Favorinus (c. 80-150 CE) is an example. He visited Corinth a few times. “He (Favorinus) had given the crowd a sample of his eloquence (logos) and had been very well received. On the second visit some years later the response of the Corinthian people was stronger still. Favorinus refers to the spoudé…tou pléthous (eagerness of the people) with which his eloquence was embraced, and says that because of it the people considered him hós aristos hellēnōn and importuned him to stay in Corinth. So impressed were the Corinthians with Favorinus’ eloquence that they caused a bronze statue to be cast in his likeness and placed in the most prestigious position in the city’s Library, a location where, as Favorinus put it, the Corinthians felt it would most effectively stimulate the youth to persevere in the same pursuits as myself” (Favorinus, Discourse 37.9, 22; 37.8) (Litfin, Paul’s Theology of Proclamation, 144).
Unlike those sophists and rhetoricians, and unlike the practices of other apostles (1 Cor 9:3-6), Paul, as a newly arrived teacher in Corinth, intentionally refused to follow such expected procedures. He was not indeed interested in advertising himself and preaching the gospel with overt rhetorical prowess, eloquence, and human-wisdom-oriented speech in order to attract the Corinthian citizens. Paul instead addressed the gospel message according to the inspiration and demonstration of the Spirit and power of God (1 Cor 2:4, 10-13, 16), as he himself claims. He refused to mimic in his preaching the rhetorical and cultural customs and traditions that the contemporary sophists and rhetoricians practised. He even gave up making use of his right to put a financial claim upon the Corinthian believers in order to make the gospel free of charge in his preaching (“not making full use of my right in the gospel,” 9:18). He preached the gospel free of charge to all Corinthians, whether educated or uneducated, whether of high social status or lower class, and of whatever ethnic origin (1 Cor 9:18, 19). If Paul had wanted, as a teacher and/or as an apostle, he could have requested and accepted financial support from the new patrons of the Corinthian Christian community. This was a traditional pattern in Christian communities of Paul’s time (1 Cor 9:3-6; “the Lord commended that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel” in v. 14). This was also consistent with the social and cultural practices in civic societies within the first century Greco-Roman world (e.g. 1 Cor 9:7, 10-12). Yet Paul did not do so in Corinth (9:12, 15, 18), although he did accept a monetary gift from the poorer Macedonian Christian communities (2 Cor 11:9). Paul’s seemingly inconsistent practice contributed in part to causing tensions between his ‘opponents’ and him, and the

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22We note again that the only patron (prostatis) that Paul openly acknowledges and publicly names in the Corinthian area is Phoebe, a prominent woman in Cenchreae (Rom 16:1-2) (for more details see 2.2.3 above).
problem of conflict (eris) and divisions (schismata) among the members in the
Corinthian congregation (1 Cor 3:3; 1:10; 2 Cor 11:10; 12:20).

Regardless of the reasons why Paul didn’t reinforce cultural expectations in
his rhetoric, it appears from his letters to the Corinthians that he disregarded and
devalued their tendency to esteem highly wisdom and eloquence (and patronage, as I
will argue later). This may be the reason why it appears that Paul did not make any
prominent converts amongst the Roman Corinthians of full Roman citizenship and the
highest social classes in Corinthian civic society. Nonetheless, he made several
converts amongst the Roman and Latin Corinthians of the freed-people classes.23

Furthermore, Paul’s behaviour seems to have provoked some of the Corinthian
Christians who expressed great love for the rhetorical, cultural, and social values of
wisdom and eloquence. Because of this, they attacked Paul’s rhetorical deficiencies in
his preaching and his refusal of patronal relationships and financial support (see
further below). This consolidated their opposition to him and even cast doubt on the
genuineness of his apostleship (e.g. 1 Cor 9:1-23; 2 Cor 10-13).

Instead, some of these Pauline ‘opponents’ seem to have preferred Apollos to
be their leader in the Christian community, because they considered him as having
better rhetorical skills, consistent with his Alexandrian origin.24 Unlike Paul, Apollos
apparently was more adept at displaying his rhetorical skills and eloquence in his
speech. Luke supports this view of Apollos’ eloquence, depicting him as “an eloquent
man” (anēr logios, Acts 18:24). Those Corinthian Christians who had a favourable
impression of Apollos’ speech would no doubt have offered Apollos patronage and
financial support which he apparently accepted. This is supported by 1 Corinthian
9:4-6, “Do we not have the right to our food and drink…Or is it only Barnabas and I

23See 2.2.3 above.
24See Pogoloff, Logos and Sophia, 181: also Jerry L. Sumney, ‘Servants of Satan’, ‘False Brothers’
and Other Opponents of Paul (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 76-77.
who have no right to refrain from working for a living?” Clearly Barnabas and Paul worked for a living, yet most of the apostles and Christian teachers Paul knew did not because of the Lord’s command that “those who proclaim should get their living by the gospel” (1 Co 9:14). Apparently, Apollos was included amongst those Christian teachers and workers who received financial support from some wealthy members of the Corinthian congregation, and who were perhaps among Paul’s implied Corinthian ‘opponents’.²⁵ It is quite plausible to suggest that these more wealthy Corinthian Christians were patrons of Apollos, who Paul then (teasingly or in reality) accuses of sloganeering: “I belong to Apollos” (egō eimi Apollō). Such behaviour would explain Paul’s description of the party of Apollos in Corinth, after Paul had left the city (1 Cor 1:12; 3:4).²⁶ This would also constitute a major factor in causing the Corinthian congregation to split into factions (schismata), which were one of the most critical problems in the Corinthian Christian gatherings (1 Cor 1:10-13; 3:1-9; 4:6-7).

### 3.1.2 Corinthian Boasting

Some of the Corinthian Christians, as I briefly noted earlier, were perceived by Paul to be boasting about their wisdom, eloquence, wealth, power, and high social status in the Corinthian Christian ekklēsia (e.g. 1:26, 29-31; 4:7, 19). Paul speaks of these

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²⁵This is supported by Pogoloff (Logos and Sophia, 193) and Hays (First Corinthians, 147).

²⁶For details about Apollos’ party, see 3.2 further below.
boasting Corinthians several times in 1 Corinthians 1-4.27 ‘Boasting’ (kauchasthai) was indeed a critical issue which caused conflict in the Corinthian congregation, as is evident in the way Paul addresses the community in 1 Corinthians and 1-4.

The way Cicero had boasted (gloriatur) was, as argued earlier, typical of the way some Corinthians boasted, and is inversely related to Paul’s ironic ‘boasting’ (e.g. 1 Cor 1:28; 5:6; 9:15, 16; 15:31; 2 Cor 11:18, 21; 12:1). Cicero’s legacy of wisdom and eloquence indicates the prevalence of imitating (mimēomai) and boasting (gloriatur) in eloquence and political success, to the glory of the ancestors.28 Paul accuses some of boasting about their wisdom, eloquence, and high social status rather than Christ as the wisdom of God (1 Cor 1:29-31; 3:21). How much Paul himself is using exaggeration and irony to make his point we cannot tell for sure. But we sense his concern that these Corinthian Christians were influenced too heavily by their

27In 1 Corinthians Paul uses the Greek verb kauchaomai 6 times (1:29, 31 [twice]; 3:21; 4:7; 13:3). I include 13:3, yet this verse is disputed among scholars in terms of text criticism (see J. Zmijewski, “Kauchaomai” in Horst Bolz and Gerhard Schneider (eds), Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament; vol. 2 [Grand Rapids; Eerdmans, 1981], 276-9, esp. 276). Paul refers to the other forms kauchēma 3 times (5:6; 9:15, 16) and kauchēsis once (15:31). In 2 Corinthians Paul uses these words even more frequently than in 1 Corinthians. The word kauchaomai occurs 20 times, kauchēma is found 3 times, and kauchēsis also appears 6 times. It is likely that the issue of boasting became even more critical in the Corinthian Christian community by the time Paul wrote 2 Corinthians.


Barrett examines the issue of boasting (kauchasthai) in the Pauline epistles and especially 1 and 2 Corinthians from psychological and theological perspectives (see Barrett, “Boasting [kauchasthai],” 363-4). Unlike him, I investigate the issue of boasting (kauchasthai) in 1 Corinthians 1-4 in terms of the rhetorical situation of first century Corinth (see also Forbes, “Comparison, Self-Praise, and Irony,” 1; Judge, “Paul’s Boasting,” 47).

28For Cicero’s boasting see 2.1 above.
Roman Corinthian contemporaries with whom they had frequent contacts at clubs and associations in the wider Corinthian civic communities. Bearing this argument in mind, we now investigate the issue of ‘boasting’ within the Pauline text of 1 Corinthians 1-4.

The word *kauchaomai* occurs in 1:29-31 for the first time in 1 Corinthians 1-4. In verse 31 in particular, Paul borrows the biblical teaching about boasting from Jeremiah 9:22-23. Interestingly, this Old Testament passage appears explicitly in 2 Corinthians 10:17. In the context of Jeremiah 9:22-23 the words ‘wisdom’ (Hebrew, *Chachmatho*), ‘might’ (Heb. *geburatho*), and ‘wealth’ (Heb. *ashro*) imply “both distorted individual identity and well being and distorted societal identity and well being.”

Especially the word ‘might’ “refers not only to individual physical strength (Judges 8:2) but also to military and political power (1 Kings 15:23; Isaiah 11:2).”

In Jeremiah’s view, the people were boasting (Heb. *ithhalel*) about the wisdom, power, and wealth they possessed and considered these social resources more important than the knowledge of God. From Jeremiah’s perspective their boasting revealed an “anthropocentric” bias and preoccupation. Hence, Jeremiah critiques the way they boasted (Jer 9:22). He challenges them to stop boasting of the sources of their social security in terms of wisdom, power, and wealth. Furthermore, he encourages his people to boast of the knowledge of God and base their boasting on

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“God’s faithful character and acts such as steadfast love (chesed), justice (mishpat), and righteousness (tsedakah)” which are truly “the source of identity and well being, of security and governance” for them. By doing this, Jeremiah challenges his people to move from their anthropocentric boasting about wisdom, might, power, and wealth, to the “theocentric” boasting about the knowledge of God and His steadfast love, justice, and righteousness. These sorts of themes are evoked in 1 Corinthians 1:26-31 as well.

In the Pauline passage, the issue of boasting is dealt with in close relation to the social and cultural environment of Roman Corinth in the first century CE. This is evident in that the Pauline language of 1 Corinthians 1-4 includes “wise” (sophos), “according to worldly standard” (kata sarka), “powerful” (dynatos), “noble birth” (eugenēs), and “to boast” (kauchaomai) (vv. 26, 29). Clearly, these Pauline words reflect on the social status and behaviour of some of the Corinthian Christians.

Paul perceived them to be boasting about their wisdom, wealth, power, and high social status in the Christian community. Paul’s ‘boasting’ was “a parody of conventional norms” which were “absolutely de rigueur” in the first century Greco-Roman world and Roman Corinth. Similarly, Forbes argues that Paul’s ‘boasting’ was “a parody of the forms of rhetorical self-advertisement current” in Greco-Roman societies in the first century CE. This culture of boasting is, as I have argued, part of the rhetorical and cultural legacy of Cicero’s writings and example. The Corinthians and particularly Roman Corinthians, would have been influenced by the pattern of

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36Forbes, however, admits that it is difficult to “specify what these forms might be” (Forbes, “Comparison, Self-Praise, and Irony,” 1).
37For Cicero’s ideas of boasting see 2.1 above.
‘boasting’ (gloriatur) and ‘imitation’ (imitator) prevalent in Greco-Roman rhetoric encouraged by Cicero. Paul’s implication that they were boasting (kauchaomai) about their wisdom, eloquence, wealth, power, and high social status in their Corinthian civic society thus has some substance.38

This legacy of ‘boasting’ (gloriatur) is also related more specifically to the tendency towards ‘boasting’ (kauchasthai) occurring amongst sophists and teachers of rhetoric in the sophist movement of the first century Greco-Roman world and Roman Corinth.39 ‘Boasting’ was particularly prevalent in a sophistic and rhetorical educational environment. Teachers competed amongst themselves to secure a good number of students in their schools, and advertised and displayed their rhetorical skills in public assemblies (ekklēsia). In so doing, they were recognised publicly and were honoured by their students and the wider populace. These popular teachers boasted about their rhetorical abilities.40 This is also in accord with Cicero describing teachers of rhetoric as boasting about themselves. He states, “The professors and masters of rhetoric…boasted (gloriat us) before an audience…(of) their knowledge of literature and poetry, and the doctrines of natural science.” 41 He further says, “anybody (can) boast about (gloriando)...his (her) success...You actually make a habit of boasting (gloriari) that you did so.” 42

The students, whom the teachers of rhetoric educated, also demonstrated their exclusive loyalty to their teachers and praised their rhetorical abilities. They promoted

38 My argument is supported by Forbes who claims that “consistent conventions relating to self-praise (or boasting) can be shown to exist from at least 100 BCE (and Cicero’s day), through Paul’s time, and beyond (the time of Plutarch, and Dio Crysostom)” (Forbes, “Comparison, Self-Praise, and Irony,” 8).
39 The sophist movement at Corinth is evidenced by Dio of Prusa (c. 40-112 CE) and his eighth oration, Or 8; ‘Diogenes’ or ‘On Virtue’; Favorinus (c. 80-150 CE) and his Corinthian oration (Or. 37), and Plutarch of Chaeronea (c. 50-120 CE) and his work, Questions Conviviales (for details see Winter, Philo and Paul, 123-140 and also above).
40 See Winter, After Paul Left, 37.
41 Cicero, De Oratore, 3.32.127.
42 Cicero, Paradoxa Stoicorum, 1.1.15; 1:4:32.
their teachers’ “professional attributes” and “educative prowess.” Thus, boasting (or self-praise) was “a prime characteristic of popular teachers” and their followers in the sophistic and rhetorical educational context of Roman Corinth.

In order to critique such conduct Paul employs several contrasting phrases in 1 Corinthians 1-4: “foolish” – “wise” (mōros – sophos), “weak” – “strong” (asthenēs – ischuros), “low” – “noble birth” (agenēs/ eksoutheneō – eugenēs), and “things that are not” – “things that are” (ta mē onta – ta onta) (1:18-28). In Paul’s perception, some of the Corinthian Christians boasted about their social privilege – wisdom, wealth, power, and high social status – in the Christian ekklēsia (1:26). Nonetheless, Paul appears to overturn the boasting and contends that they wouldn’t find any favour in the eyes of God by expressing their social privilege in the Christian community. He reminds them of “God’s paradoxical election”: He elected the foolish, poor, and powerless of the world to shame the wise, wealthy, and powerful (1:27-28). This is evident in the fact that the majority of the Corinthian Christians consisted of “people whom the world scorns” or people who were poorer and of lower social classes (see 1:26; 4:8-13). Paul, therefore, appeals to them to stop boasting about their social privilege before God and in the Christian community (1:29) and instead to boast about Christ Jesus who has become “our wisdom, our righteousness and holiness and redemption” (1:30-31).

Moreover, to argue against this group of Corinthian Christians, Paul quotes Isaiah 29:14, “I will destroy the wisdom of the wise (tēn sophian tôn sophōn), and the cleverness of the clever I will thwart” (1 Cor 1:19). He also states that “the foolishness of God (to mōron tou theou) is wiser (sophōteron) than humans” (1:25a)

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43Winter, After Paul Left, 36, 39.
45Hays, First Corinthians, 32.
46Hays, First Corinthians, 33; also 2.2.3 above.
and that “God chose what is foolish (ta mōra) in the world to shame the wise (tous sophous)” (1:27a). In these words, Paul contrasts Corinthian wisdom with the wisdom of God. He seems to highlight intrinsic differences of quality between the two kinds of wisdom. The former is ‘human thought-based’ and ‘cultural conventions-oriented’ wisdom, while the latter ‘divine power-oriented’ and ‘Christ-crucified-originated’ wisdom. He saw that some of the Corinthian Christians valued the former more highly than the latter, and even boasted about themselves because they believed they had such human and culturally oriented wisdom (e.g. 1:29; 3:18; 4:7).

This rhetorically oriented wisdom, in Paul’s eyes, motivated and stimulated some of the Corinthian believers to act arrogantly (1 Cor 4:18) and over-zealously (zēlos) and to engender strife (eris) amongst themselves (3:3a). They behaved in “an immature way” and operated in a worldly (Greco-Roman) fashion, just as the unbelieving contemporary Corinthians (kata anthrōpon peripateite) with whom they had frequent contacts at clubs, banquets, and associations (collegia) in the broader Corinthian civic society (3:3b). Moreover, such behaviour and boasting no doubt played a factor in causing schisms in the Corinthian Christian ekklēsia (1 Cor 1:10). Paul, therefore, criticised their mentality and conduct and challenged the Corinthian ideals of wisdom (1:20; 2:6).

As a further challenge to this behaviour, Paul demonstrates the wisdom that is ‘Christ-crucified-oriented’ wisdom in 1 Corinthians 1-4. This wisdom he describes as the power of God first for salvation to all who have faith (1:18, 21) and secondly for the resurrection of the dead (1 Cor 15:12-57). By His power, God raised the crucified Christ from the dead as the wisdom of God (1 Cor 15:12-57). This is regarded as the

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Winter, After Paul Left, 41. Winter understands the Corinthian Christians’ zeal (zēlos) in relation to the attitude of students towards their teachers in first century Roman Corinth (After Paul Left, 39). His understanding supports my argument that Corinthian boasting was related to the cultural tendency of boasting influenced by the sophist movement in the first century CE (see above).
essence of the gospel message Paul preached in Corinth (1 Cor 15:1-4) and as the
ground for Paul’s boasting (1 Cor 9:15, 16). Preaching the gospel message of Jesus
Christ as the wisdom of God, Paul challenges his ‘opponents’ whether they too
considered the word of the cross (ho logos tou staurou) foolish (1 Cor 1:18a) and
boasted of the social and cultural understandings of wisdom (1 Cor 1:29).
Furthermore, Paul challenges them to turn their back on such an unhelpful mentality
and behaviour (“no human being might boast in the presence of God,” 1 Cor 1:29; “let
no one boast of people,” 1 Cor 3:21), and also urges them to imitate (mimētēs) the
way he boasts of the gospel of Christ crucified as the wisdom of God (1 Cor 1:30, 31;
3:18; 4:16).

Some of the Corinthian Christians may also have boasted about their high
status in the social pyramid and social and patronal connections with those
Corinthians who had power and control of the social and political positions in the
broader Corinthian civic communities (e.g. 1:26). It appears that they believed that
their social privilege would help them find more favour in gaining and playing
leadership roles in the Christian ekklēsia and the house/temple of God, just as in the
wider civic society and so they naturally took control of leadership positions in the
Christian communities (e.g. 3:5-15; 4:1, 2). This mentality and behaviour can be seen
as a result of the heavy influence of cultural and rhetorical conventions together with
the social and patronal networks that characterised the civic life of the first century
Greco-Roman world.

Paul denounces such thinking and behaviour when he says: “the weakness of
God (to asthenes tou theou) is stronger than humans (ischuroteron tōn anthrōpōn)”
(1:25); “God chose what is weak in the world (ta asthenē tou kosmou) to shame the
strong (ta ischura)” (1:27b); “God chose what is low (ta agenē) and despised (ta
eksouthēmena) in the world, even things that are not (ta mē onta), to bring to nothing things that are (ta onta)” (1:28). In these expressions, Paul compares the Corinthian Christians’ social privilege with their calling from God. In 1 Corinthians 1-4, he appears to have argued that his ‘opponents’ should see the social status they possessed (1:26) as God’s gift (4:7; 7:7) and that the calling they received from God should be considered more important and valuable than their social privilege in the Christian communities (1:26a). That is why Paul argued so strongly that they should stop expressing their social privilege and boasting in the Christian communities (4:7). I would argue, however, that nowhere in 1 Corinthians does Paul disregard and devalue their social privilege in itself. Paul criticises their misconduct and the improper behaviour with it, especially their boasting about it (e.g. 5:6). Clearly, he recognised different classes of social status amongst the Corinthian Christians and encouraged them to remain in the situation in which they were and maintain the social status that they had when God called them, whether free (eleuthēros) or slave (doulos) (1:26; 7:22). Whatever situation they were in and whatever social status they possessed, that was the will of God (7:23). Paul says, ekastos en o eklēthē adelpoi, en toutō menetō para theō (“Brother and sisters, in whatever state each was called, there let him/her remain with God,” 7:24). Hays affirms that “Paul’s point is to reassure his readers that they should not be troubled about their present social location and that they should focus their attention on serving God, wherever they stand in the social order.”

48 Similarly, Collins, First Corinthians, 109.
49 Hays, First Corinthians, 126. Similarly, Witherington argues, “Paul’s advice is not to evaluate oneself by the larger society’s values” (Witherington, Conflict, 184). Winter also affirms, “Paul did not allow non-Roman Christian free men to sell themselves into slavery as a route to Roman citizenship … Aspiring to the status of Roman citizenship, with its attendant financial and social benefits via the route of voluntary slavery, was therefore forbidden” (Winter, Seek the Welfare, 162).

Nonetheless, some scholars such as Neil Elliott disagree with this argument. Elliott asserts, “Paul hopes his readers will not be preoccupied with their present circumstances, but he certainly does not absolutise those circumstances themselves as ‘God’s calling’. ‘Staying in one’s position’ is not the
In Paul’s argument, there is no difference, in terms of God’s calling (*klēsis*), between those Corinthians who possessed high social status and others of lower class, between wise (or educated) and foolish (or uneducated), between socially influential and powerful, and powerless, between wealthy and poor, and between free and slave (1 Cor 1:27, 28; 7:20-24). Paul thus reminds the Corinthian Christians that they were all “equal” in Christ (3:8). In other words, they were “equally brothers and sisters in Christ regardless of their social situation.” They were all “God’s fellow workers” (3:9). They were all “servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God” (4:1).

He also encouraged them to recognise that they were all people of the Spirit of God, not of flesh (2:14-16; 3:3). They could comprehend the thoughts and wisdom of God through the Spirit only (2:11). Each of them had “his/her own gift from God, one of one kind and one of another” (7:7; also 2:12, 14; 12:4-11, 27-30). Moreover, Paul encouraged them to acknowledge that just as Apollos and Paul himself were called (3:5-9), so they were all called by God to boast of the Lord Jesus Christ as the wisdom of God and the power of God, not of human wisdom or social privilege (1:31; 3:18-21). God made Christ the foundation of their wisdom (*sophia*), “righteousness” (*dikaiosunē*), “sanctification” (*agiasmos*), and “redemption” (*apolutrōsis*) (1:30).

In summary, Paul is convinced that some of the Corinthian Christians valued too highly their social and cultural understandings of wisdom and eloquence and their social privilege in the Christian communities. They further boasted about themselves governing principle in 1 Corinthians 7, or even in 7:21. To the contrary, it makes far better sense to read the verse as Paul’s urgent wish not to be misunderstood as encouraging slaves to continue in their state longer than they have to” (Neil Elliott, *Liberating Paul: the Justice of God and the Politics of the Apostle* [Maryknoll: Orbis, 1994; 5th print. 2001], 35). However, Paul’s language in 7:17-24 doesn’t indicate that Paul encouraged the Corinthian Christians to aspire to higher social status, although this was a social phenomenon in their time. He rather encouraged them to stay with their social status, whether slave or free (7:21-24; 12:13) and ethnic identity, whether Jew or Gentile (7:18-20; 12:13). Moreover, Paul succinctly argued that they should consider God’s calling (*klēsis*) more valuable than social status and ethnic identity. In this respect, therefore, Paul is ecclesiologically radical and politically conservative.

Witherington, *Conflict*, 184.
and their possessions in terms of social and cultural advantage. This boasting was a result of the strong influence of Greco-Roman rhetorical traditions and the legacy of social and patronal networks.

To challenge this thinking, Paul borrows the biblical teaching of boasting from Jeremiah 9:23. He perceived similarities between the biblical situation and his own Corinthian circumstances, and then accommodated the biblical text to the situation of the Corinthian Christians. By doing this, Paul challenged the Corinthian Christians to leave their anthropocentric and social-and-cultural-conventions-oriented boasting and imitate him as one boasting in the Lord Jesus Christ as the wisdom of God. This is theocentric and Christ-centred boasting used for the purposes of cultural transformation and building up the ekklēsiai.

3.2 An Analysis of Social and Patronal Networks as Indicated in 1 Corinthians 1-4

I will here examine the problem of schismata in the Corinthian Christian community (1 Cor 1:10-12; 11:18-19) in close relation to patronal networks and social clubs and collegia. These networks played a critical role in the interrelationship of people involved in social clubs and associations. I have already argued that these social and patronal networks had a profound impact upon the civic life of the Corinthians in the time of Paul, whether Christ-believers or non-believers, whether people of high social status or low classes, whether Romans, Greek, or Jews. Furthermore, I will contend that these networks played a critical factor in causing the Corinthian Christian community to split into factions. Influenced strongly by the social phenomenon of these patronal networks, some of the Corinthian Christians continued to express their wealth, high social status, and patronal hierarchies in the Christian community (1 Cor
1:26). Thereby, they discriminated against fellow Christians of lower social classes. Their unhelpful behaviour caused divisions among the members in the Christian community (1 Cor 11:18-22). I now turn to an analysis of social clubs and associations (collegia) that were closely interrelated with these social and patronal networks.

### 3.2.1 Social Clubs and Associations (collegia)

In the first century Greco-Roman world, social clubs and associations (collegia) existed at all levels of society. All people regardless of social status voluntarily organised and joined collegia. In these collegia people engaged in various social and religious activities: “a sacrifice to a god, an occasional meal, a drinking party, an exchange of different political views or a confirmation of shared ones.”

These private and voluntary collegia were closely related to patronal networks because members of wealth and high social-status supported the clubs by making significant financial contributions to dinner parties, banquets, and other social activities. They were patrons of the clubs. In so doing, they took control of the collegia and exercised their authority over other members who became their clients. These clients, in return, offered them honour, social assistance, and promises of solidarity and loyalty. In this process, patronal hierarchies were established between some members of wealth and high social status who were patrons and others of lower

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classes who were clients within these social clubs and associations. This was characteristic of patronal relationships in civic and social communities in the first century Greco-Roman world including Roman Corinth.\textsuperscript{53}

The Corinthian Christians Paul refers to as “wise,” “powerful,” and “of noble birth” in 1 Corinthians 1:26, would have been part of such collegia through which they would have had frequent contacts with non-Christians. They would then have been part of patron-client networks with those people who possessed full Roman citizenship and the highest social status, and who had power and control in Corinthian civic society.

In the Greco-Roman world, there were generally three different sorts of collegia (often overlapping in function): professional collegia, collegia sodalicia, and collegia tenuiorum. Professional collegia comprised businesspersons, merchants, traders, physicians, carpenters, weavers, fullers, bakers, silversmiths, and shippers. This sort of club was closely related to the commercial prosperity of first century Roman Corinth. People who belonged to these clubs possessed considerable wealth and contributed economic services to the city. Furthermore, they acted as patrons of the city. They supported financially the imperial cults and the Isthmian games. They also built patronal relationships with imperial officials such as the governor of Achaia. By means of these relationships they were promoted to higher social classes in the Corinthian civic communities.

The collegia sodalicia were joined for religious reasons. People gathered together in these clubs usually on a monthly basis, and honoured and worshipped gods as their patron deities. In this respect, Christian gatherings and Jewish synagogues in Corinth would have been recognised as similar to these collegia by non-Christians.

\textsuperscript{53}Meeks, \textit{First Urban Christians}, 78; Garnsey and Saller, \textit{The Roma Empire}, 157; Chow, “Patronage in Roman Corinth,” 119.
and non-Jewish believers. The *collegia tenuiorum* comprised poorer people. The poor organised these clubs for the primary purpose of funerals and the burial of the dead for members, and they can be seen as “burial societies, guaranteeing a proper burial for their members.”

It can be said that in the first century Greco-Roman world many people belonged to one or other of these *collegia* which were significant in maintaining the social fabric of the day.

Moreover, some of the Corinthian Christians may well have regarded the Corinthian Christian community as either one of the *collegia sodalicia* or *collegia tenuiorum*. I will argue that this is indicated in Paul’s description of the Corinthian Christians’ eating food sacrificed to idols (1 Cor 8) and of their understanding of the resurrection of the dead (1 Cor 15).

First, some of the Corinthian Christians may well have seen the Corinthian Christian *ekklēsia* as something like the *collegia sodalicia* where people honoured and worshipped Roman and Greek gods as their patron deities. The possibility of the misconception of the Corinthian Christian community as one of the *collegia sodalicia*

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54 *Collegia* of this sort were “a distinct type of group in the Greco-Roman world” (Rives, *Religion in the Roman Empire*, 125).

55 See Meeks, *First Urban Christians*, 77-80; Stambaugh and Balch, *Social Environment*, 124-6. In addition, J. B. Rives states, “(permanent) immigrants often associated with one another and at times even established formal societies (or associations, collegia)...an important activity of these ethnic collegia was the worship of (their traditional deities). For example, a certain Karpion son of Anoubion dedicated an altar to Sarapis and the emperor Septimius Severus on behalf of the ‘household of Alexandrians’, probably a group of resident Alexandrians, in Tomis on the coast of Lower Moesia (*IGR* 1.604)” (Rives, *Religion in the Roman Empire*, 122-3).

It is, however, “not always easy or even appropriate to make sharp divisions between them” because “virtually all associations shared the same basic features” (Rives, *Religion in the Roman Empire*, 122). One of them is that every association had its own patron deity that the members worshipped. For example, craftspeople as members of a professional collegia could worship as their own patron deity “Minerva, the goddess of handicrafts” (Rives, *Religion in the Roman Empire*, 123). Another is that all collegia were concerned about the deaths of their members. If anyone of its members died, the association organised his/her burial, paid all the expenses, and performed the funeral rite (Rives, *Religion in the Roman Empire*, 125). The third is that many associations emphasised fellowship amongst their members including festivities and shared meals together on a regular basis. For example, “the worshippers of Diana and Antinous in Lanuvium had regular group dinners; the regulations specify that the annual *magistri cenarum*, ‘dinner-masters’, were to provide good wine, bread, sardines, tablecloths, hot water, and service” (Rives, *Religion in the Roman Empire*, 125).

56 The…Christian communities were comparable to religious clubs (*collegia sodalicia*) according to their objective” (Theissen, “Social Structure of Pauline Communities,” 77.
is evident in 1 Corinthians 8 and 10.\footnote{In 1 Corinthians and especially 8 and 10 Paul employs often the Greek word \textit{eidōlon} (4 times, 8:4, 7; 10:19; 12:2; cf. 2 Cor 6:16), and its equivalents, \textit{eidōleion} (once, 8:10), \textit{eidōlothuton} (5 times, 8:1, 4, 7, 10; 10:19), \textit{eidōlolatrēs} (4 times, 5:10, 11; 6:9; 10:7), and \textit{eidōlolatria} (once, 10:14). Clearly, at the time Paul wrote 1 Corinthians 8 and 10, the eating of food offered to idols was a critical issue for the whole Corinthian congregation (e.g. 10:6-9) because it was harming the conscience of other fellow Christians (the “weak”) (8:7-13). Against this unhelpful behaviour Paul admonishes, “take care lest this liberty of yours somehow become a stumbling block to the weak” (\textit{bhepete mē pōs hē eksousia humōn houtē proskomma genētai tois asthenesin} in 8:9, “Do not be idolaters (mēde \textit{eidōlolatrai} gineseth) in 10:7, and “shun (or flee from) the worship of idols” (\textit{pheugete apo tēs \textit{eidōlolatrias}) in 10:14. The use of these negative imperative verbs suggests the stopping of “an action already begun” (James A. Brooks and Carlton L. Winbery, \textit{Syntax of New Testament Greek} [Lanham; London: University Press of America, 1979, revised 1988], 127).

translated as “moral conscience” but “bad feelings”) of the weak.\textsuperscript{58} This is because their eating would harm the weak and bring upon them “a painful wound” (1 Cor 8:7-13: 10:28-29).\textsuperscript{59} Similarly, Newton contends that chapter 8 reveals Paul’s strong disapproval of some of the Corinthian believers’ participation in temple meals because this eating damaged the weak believers. 10:14-22 confirms this Pauline position.\textsuperscript{60}

Furthermore, the issue of eating sacrificial meat should be seen from a communal point of view and linked to the theme of \textit{agapē} in chapter 13, which is the basis for Christian behaviour. Willis contends that “there is a fundamental agreement in Paul’s arguments” about eating meat in 1 Cor 8 and 10.\textsuperscript{61} “In 1 Cor 8 Paul sets forth four basic arguments: (1) a critique of ‘rights’ (or ‘freedom’, \textit{exousia}, 1 Cor 8:9; 9:4, 5, 6, 12, 18) on the basis of love (\textit{agapē}), (2) a reminder of the necessity of considering the other person, (3) the importance of the communal dimension of Christian faith, and (4) Paul’s own conduct as exemplary.”\textsuperscript{62}

Similarly, Smith claims that in 1 Cor 8 and 10 Paul addresses different meal situations and describes the “meal ethic” as one of “social obligation” which believers should participate in.\textsuperscript{63} In chapter 8 he describes a believer in “a chance encounter with a brother or sister who is participating at a banquet in a temple dining room” (8:10).\textsuperscript{64} In chapter 10 he pictures a believer who is invited to dine “at the home of an unbeliever” (10:27).\textsuperscript{65} In both chapters Paul presents the importance of meal ethics at

\textsuperscript{58} Gooch, “Consciousness,” 247-48, 251.  
\textsuperscript{59} Gooch, “Consciousness,” 249.  
\textsuperscript{60} Newton, \textit{Deity and Diet}, 312-3.  
\textsuperscript{61} Willis, \textit{Idol Meat}, 113.  
\textsuperscript{62} Willis, \textit{Idol Meat}, 113. According to Willis, in chapter 10 Paul insists that the Corinthian Christians “must not participate in the (quasi) religious meals of their pagan neighbours held at an idol shrine” for the religious meals were idolatry. This Pauline insistence is based on “the Jewish heritage” that an act of worship is given only to God the Father (see 8:6) (Willis, \textit{Idol Meat}, 221-2).  
\textsuperscript{63} Smith, \textit{Symposium to Eucharist}, 209, 211.  
\textsuperscript{64} Smith, \textit{Symposium to Eucharist}, 210.  
\textsuperscript{65} Smith, \textit{Symposium to Eucharist}, 211.
a banquet, which is similarly applied “among brethren at the Christian communal meal.” Paul insists that when a believer participates at a banquet or is invited to eat at the home of an unbeliever, the believer creates “friendship” (philia) and “communal bonds” with the unbeliever. These are comparable to those created among brethren in the Christian community. Especially, this friendship can be understood in the same sense as agapē in chapter 13. This agapē is “the ethical basis for social obligation at the communal meal.” Smith further argues that in these chapters Paul pays more attention to the social obligation a believer has towards a fellow believer or an unbeliever at “a communal meal” than to whether the food offered to idols “has an efficacy.” Paul acknowledges that such food doesn’t (8:4-6; 10:29-30). Furthermore, Paul insists that the believer’s action should not offend the conscience of the fellow believer or that of the unbeliever. It rather has to lead to “upbuilding” (oikodomē, 10:23) and be “beneficial” (sympheron, 10:33).

None of these scholars, however, explicitly relates the issue of eating meat to the problem of factionalism (schismata) in the Corinthian congregation (1 Cor 1:10; 11:18-9). Nonetheless, I understand the issue of meat offered to idols in close relation to the schisms in the Corinthian congregation Paul addresses in 1:10-12, as does

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66Smith, Symposium to Eucharist, 210.
67Smith, Symposium to Eucharist, 210-11.
68Smith, Symposium to Eucharist, 211.
69Smith, Symposium to Eucharist, 209.
70Smith, Symposium to Eucharist, 210. In addition, scholars argue that Paul advised the Corinthian believers to abstain from participating in sacrificial meals because it was a sin of idolatry (see Barrett, “Things Sacrificed,” 153; Smit, “Rhetorical Disposition,” 490-1; Sanders, “Paul between Jews and Gentiles,” 81; Dawes, “Danger of Idolatry,” 98; Sunnem, 1 Corinthians 9:24-27,” 333). Others understand the issue in an ethical sense. Fee asserts that in Paul’s thought the eating of food dedicated to idols is forbidden not because it is absolutely idolatry or it is prohibited as law, but because it is “incompatible with life in Christ” (Fee, “Eidōlothuta Once Again,” 196-7). Murphy O’Connor argues that to eat meat sacrificed to idols didn’t diminish the Corinthians’ spiritual gifts. In other words, it was not a matter of the sin of idolatry but a moral issue. “Idol meat was morally neutral” (Murphy O’Connor, “Food,” 298). Similarly, Horsley contends that the issue of the eating of idol-meat was ethical. It was a matter of “relationship between people, not of one’s inner consciousness” (Horsley, “Consciousness,” 589).
Newton, albeit briefly.\textsuperscript{71} It is also necessary to separate 1 Corinthians 8:1-10:22 from 10:23-11:1 for Paul addresses different issues in such two different contexts.\textsuperscript{72} In the former, Paul deals with the issue of eating food offered to idols in temples and imperial cults. He sees the worship in these locations as idolatry (or idol worship) and opposes it because this idolatry led to immorality (see 1 Cor 9:8-14; 10:1-22), just as in the classic Jewish critique of idolatry.

In the latter, however, Paul tackles the issue of eating meat within the context of a domestic (or household) cult. The main participants in the household cults were the deceased ancestors and the family members. The living were obligated to venerate (or show respect and honour for) the dead ancestors and make offerings to them at the family home and the gravesite on a regular basis. In so doing, they felt reunited with the dead. For these reasons, the household cult played an important part in maintaining the identity of the family in Greco-Roman world.\textsuperscript{73} Paul does not speak out against this domestic cult nor against the eating of meat in that context (see 1 Cor 10:25, 27). So it is appropriate to investigate these two issues in different contexts. This separation also helps to evaluate these issues from a Korean-Confucian Christian perspective.\textsuperscript{74} In this section, therefore, I pay attention only to the issue of idol worship in temples and imperial cults.

A careful interpretation of the issue of ‘meat offered to idols’ should pay close attention to the words, $\textit{eidōlon}$ (8:4, 7; 10:19), $\textit{daimonion}$ (10:20, 21), $\textit{theos}$ (8:5, 6; 10: 20) and $\textit{kurios}$ (8:5, 6; 10:21) and then investigate these words in close relation to the imperial cult and patronage, and the $\textit{collegia sodalicia}$.\textsuperscript{75} The words, “many gods”

\textsuperscript{71}Newton, \textit{Deity and Diet}, 277; for more details see further below.
\textsuperscript{72}So does Winter (\textit{After Paul Left}, 269-301).
\textsuperscript{73}See Rives, \textit{Religion in the Roman Empire}, 117-18; Jon D. Mikalson, \textit{Ancient Greek Religion} (Malden; Oxford; Carlton: Blackwell, 2005), 136; for more details on the domestic cult see Chapter Four below.
\textsuperscript{74}See Chapter Four further below.
\textsuperscript{75}In chapters 8 and 10, the words $\textit{eidōlon}$, $\textit{daimonion}$, $\textit{theos}$, and $\textit{kurios}$ can be interpreted several ways.
(theoi polloi) and "many lords" (kurioi polloi) of which Paul speaks in 1 Corinthian 8:5, include the emperor whom some of the Corinthian Christians had worshipped and venerated in the imperial cult (1 Cor 8:7). The emperor was described as ‘lord’, ‘saviour’, ‘son of a god’, and ‘patron’, because of the influence of imperial patronage and the imperial cult. For example, “At the end of his life, (Julius) Caesar (d. 44 BCE)…was appointed a god of the Roman state by the Senate,” and Augustus was frequently depicted as “a god on earth, or a god-like individual in contemporary poetry and private iconography.”

This notion then helps us understand 1 Corinthians 8:1-10:22 in a wider context. Some of the Corinthian Christians appear to have described themselves as people who possessed knowledge (gnōsis) (v.1). Boasting about their knowledge they conducted themselves arrogantly and acted on their knowledge (vv. 1, 10). In the knowledge that “an idol has no existence” and “there is no God but one” (1 Cor 8:4), they, like their contemporaries in the wider society, continued their membership in collegia sodalicia, even after conversion to the Christian faith. In such collegia sodalicia they associated with those who honoured gods as their patron deities and ate meat offered as sacrifices to the deities (8:7, 10; 10:18-20). Perhaps they attended the imperial cult, and dedicated sacrifices to the emperor and called him lord, saviour, and god, and implicitly worshipped him as the universal patron (v. 5). Perhaps some also participated in dinner parties and banquets and ate food sacrificed to deities in the

(except when the words theos and kurios clearly refer to God the Father [theos patēr, 8:6; 10:20 and Lord Jesus Christ [kurios Iēsous christos, 8:6; 10:21]). Newton argues that these words can refer to “a physical image or representation,” “a false god,” or “heroes and emperors” (Newton, Deity and Diet, 285-6). All these interpretations are plausible in consideration of the social situation of first century Roman Corinth. The city had numerous temples, shrines, and ritual sites, numbering at least twenty-six (See 2.2.2 above; also Witherington, New Testament History, 268-9).

This is supported by Newton. He states, “what does emerge in 8:5 is that Paul refers here to a wide spectrum of beings…such as upperworld gods, underworld gods, emperors, heroes, and even divine ancestors to various degrees” (Newton, Deity and Diet, 288).

Ittai Gradel, Emperor Worship and Roman Religion (Oxford Classic Monographs; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002), 109-110; also 2.2.2 above. Similarly, Winter comments that the people in the Roman Empire “referred to the emperor as Lord” (Winter, After Paul Left, 285).
temples and to the emperor in the imperial cult (v. 10). They may well have even regarded the Corinthian Christian community as another of the *collegia sodalicia* where they called on the name of the Christian God and the Lord Jesus Christ, worshipped and venerated Him as their patron deity, just as they did in other *collegia sodalicia* in the wider civic society (1 Cor 8:4-5).

Furthermore, it is consistent with this inference to suggest that they may well have brought into the Christian community the patronal hierarchical structures that were usually found in the *collegia sodalicia*. From this patronal hierarchical perspective, some of the Corinthian Christians of wealth and high social status would have viewed God as a patron deity ranked at the highest level in the Christian *ekklēsia*. Paul appears to agree, to a certain extent, with this view since he describes God as the Father and Creator through whom all things and people exist (1 Cor 8:6). Seemingly, this affirms that God can be regarded as a patron deity in Christian communities. They then considered themselves as being ranked in the middle and saw themselves as patrons of the Christian community. This thinking seems to have led them to regard Paul’s social status lower than theirs. That is why they expected to give Paul as a client financial support. Yet he refused to accept their offer (1 Cor 9:12-23). He “avoided such patronage by means of self-support in the workshop.” Moreover, they would have viewed the rest of their fellow Christians as ranked at a lower level in the social pyramid of the Christian *ekklēsia*. They appear to have regarded the Lord’s Supper as akin to the banquets and dinner parties of the *collegia sodalicia*, and the temples and the imperial cult. There they ate food sacrificed to deities and the emperor (see above). As would have occurred in such dinner parties,

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78 Many temples had adjoining dining rooms for cultic meals. Archaeological evidence indicates that these were common in the area of Corinth” (E. Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, 180).
79 Johnson, “Paul’s Epistolary Presence,” 500 n. 46; for more details see further below.
80 See Chow, “Patronage in Roman Corinth,” 119.
so social discrimination against other fellow Christians and especially some members of who were poor and of lower classes at the Lord’s Supper (and love-feasts) occurred (see 1 Cor 11:17-22). They did not permit poorer fellow Christians to sit around the same table as they did, but they instead left them to eat outside of the building in the courtyard. These poorer and lower-ranked Christians seemed to have been provided with poorer quality food.81

Paul, however, criticised these unnamed leaders because by doing this, they abused the genuine meaning of the Lord’s Supper and despised (kataphroneō) the Christian form of gathering (ekklēsia tou theou) where all members should be treated equally as brothers and sisters in Christ regardless of their social class (1 Cor 3:8; 11:22).82 On the other hand, they affirmed that the God of Jesus is the one true God – and that the idols/emperors were not true Gods (8:4) – therefore it did not matter in other respects if they participated in banquets and dinner parties in the wider Corinthian society. Paul however strongly condemned the social consequences of idol worship in the temples, where attendees and worshippers often behaved immorally especially in terms of sexual licentiousness and prostitution, using the traditional Jewish understanding that idolatry leads to immorality (1 Cor 9:8-12; 10:1-13).83 Paul wished to protect the Corinthian Christian ekklēsia from such immorality (e.g. 1 Cor 5:9-11). He says, “We must not indulge in immorality” (1 Cor 10:8). For these reasons Paul critiqued as demonic the patron deities that some members in the Corinthian Christian community implicitly venerated at temples and then encouraged

81See Murphy-O’Connor, Paul’s Corinth, 183-4; for more details see 2.2.3 above.
82See Witherington, Conflict, 184.
83So argue R.E. Ciampa and B.S. Rosner. They state that Paul took “the traditional Jewish approach to dealing with sexual immorality and idolatry” (Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner, “The Structure and Argument of 1 Corinthians: A Biblical/Jewish Approach,” NTS 52 (2006) 205-18, esp. 218). In Roman Corinth, sexual liberty played a part both in some religious festivals and in temple precincts (see Witherington, Conflict, 13; also Murphy- O’Connor, “Saint Paul,” 152; 2.2.2).
them to stop such worship of idols (1 Cor 10:14). Their conduct further harmed and wounded some Christians who were weak, although they did not necessarily intend or notice this (1 Cor 8:7), resulting in factions in the Christian ekklēsia (11:18-9).

Paul suggests, therefore, that they should take care lest their behaviour become an obstacle to the weak (tois asthenesin) (1 Cor 8:9), lest it wound the other brothers and sisters’ conscience (suneidēsis) (1 Cor 8:10), and lest it cause the weak to fall. Moreover, Paul argues that it is a sin against Christ to wound the conscience of the brothers and sisters in the Corinthian congregation (8:7-13) because this partly caused the Corinthian Christians to split into factions (schismata) (1:10; 11:18-19; 12:25). Furthermore, Paul had a strong emphasis on unity in the Corinthian Christian community as the body of Christ (sōma christou) (1 Cor 12:1-31). He also claimed that the Corinthian Christians should have love (agapē) towards one another (1 Cor 8:1; 13:1-13). Particularly in 1 Corinthians 13:13, “so faith, hope, love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love,” Paul values love more highly than faith (pistis) and hope (elpis). He seems to assert that to have love towards one another is the most necessary and important way to reclaim the Corinthian congregation from the grips of factionalism.

Some of the Corinthian Christians may also have understood the Christian ekklēsia to be more of a kind of collegia tenuiorum, formed for the purpose of arranging funerals and the appropriate burial of the dead. This argument is supported, to a certain degree, by other scholars. J.B. Rives argues that in Greco-Roman times

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84 In this thesis it is important for me to re-interpret the Corinthian attitude towards gods and the imperial cult from my own Korean-Confucian Christian context. I will develop this further later.

85 Similarly argues Smith (Symposium to Eucharist, 211). Christian Stettler further states, “By his excursus on love in 1 Corinthians 13 Paul emphasises that love is the purpose and criterion of spiritual gifts. The gifts are but instruments of love, of the mutual upbuilding of the church. Exercising different spiritual gifts is the specific, individual way in which different Christians serve one another in love” (Christian Stettler, “The ‘Command of the Lord’ in 1 Cor 14:37 – A Saying of Jesus?” Biblica 87 [2006] 42-51, esp. 46).
“Christian groups (were) involved in the burial of their fellows,” as their contemporaries were in the wider society. B. Rawson states, “Death, burial and commemoration...have a particular role for a religious community...In the first century or so CE, the early Christian community (shared) similarities in commemorative practices and attitudes to family relationships,” which took place in voluntary collegia. W.A. Meeks proposes that

We have no evidence about the funeral practices of Pauline Christians – a silence that in itself would be grounds for doubting a direct identification of the Christian groups with collegia tenuiorum – but we can hardly doubt, in the face of...the enigmatic reference to ‘baptism (for) the dead’ in 1 Corinthians 15:29, that these groups made appropriate provision for the burial of deceased Christians.

Witherington also comments that some of the Corinthian Christians would have “viewed the Christian community as a burial society.”

Moreover, the consideration of the Corinthian congregation as analogous to a sort of collegia tenuiorum, is glimpsed in 1 Corinthians 15 and particularly 15:29, as Meek argues briefly above. Therein Paul asks the Corinthian audience two rhetorical questions: “Now if there is no resurrection, what will those do who are baptised for the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why are people baptised for them” (NIV).

The rhetorical questions imply that some members of the Corinthian Christian community would have had themselves baptised (or have been baptised) for the dead (nekroi). At the same time, some seem to have denied the resurrection of the dead in some way.

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86 Rives, Religion in the Roman Empire, 125.
88 Meeks, First Urban Christians, 78.
89 Witherington, Conflict, 293 n. 10.
90 In 1 Corinthians 15 nekros occurs 13 times, although it is nowhere found in the rest of 1 Corinthians. Nekros (dead, lifeless) is used to mean “having never been alive and lacking capacity for life.” When it is used for a person it means “a corpse who is no longer physically alive” (BAGD, 667).
91 1 Corinthians 15:29 is “a notoriously difficult crux” (Thiselton, First Corinthians, 1240); “one of the most hotly disputed passages” in 1 Corinthians (Conzelmann, 1 Corinthian, 275). Scholars split into several groups: One group of scholars argues that the Corinthians were baptised for the “sake” of the dead who were unbaptised, to make sure of their reunion with them at the resurrection (Thiselton, First
It seems likely that this group of Corinthian Christians paid much more attention to the matter of funerals and the burial of the dead than the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead that Paul had taught during his stay at Corinth. This is perhaps because they regarded the Christian gatherings as similar to one of the collegia tenuiorum in which they continued to be members. They then thought that the Corinthian Christian community was formed, in a sense, for the purposes of arranging funerals and making adequate provision for the burial of dead Christian members including themselves.\footnote{Corinthians, 1248}. Some Corinthian Christians would also have brought into the Christian community some of the cultural and religious assumptions and practices that prevailed in the wider society in social clubs (collegia tenuiorum) and in the context of domestic (household) cults.\footnote{Similarly Meeks, First Urban Christians, 78.} In the household cults, the Corinthians expressed

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\textit{Corinthians, 1248}. Another group asserts that the Corinthians exercised baptism “on account” (or “for the benefit”) of the dead to express public allegiance to the deceased patron apostles, through whose testimony they were converted and baptised, and thus to give great honour to them and reward them for their apostolic ministry (James E. Patrick, “Living Rewards for Dead Apostles: ‘Baptised for the Dead’ in 1 Corinthians 15:29” \textit{NTS} 52 (2006) 71-85, esp. 74-6; similarly Joel R. White, “‘Baptised on Account of the Dead’: the Meaning of 1 Corinthians 15:29 in its Context,” \textit{JBL} 116 (1997) 487-499, esp. 498; J. Murphy-O’Connor, “‘Baptised for the Dead’ [1 Cor., XV, 29]: A Corinthian Slogan?” \textit{RB} 88 (1981) 532-43).

The majority of scholars contend that some of the Corinthian Christians practised “vicarious (or “proxy”) baptism” for the dead in order to help them get through “a difficult transition from this world and the next” (Richard E. DeMaris, “Corinthian Religion and Baptism for the Dead [1 Corinthians 15:29]: Insights from Archaeology and Anthropology,” \textit{JBL} 114 (1995) 661-682, esp. 676), and receive “eternal security” (Witherington, \textit{Conflict}, 294; similarly Conzelmann, \textit{1 Corinthians}, 275; Morris, \textit{1 Corinthians}, 214; Winter, \textit{After Paul Left}, 103-5). “Vicarious baptisms imply, as a corollary, the expectation of resurrection” of the deceased who died, not hearing the gospel (Goulder, \textit{Completing Mission}, 189). The problem of this contention is that there is no evidence that vicarious (or proxy) baptism for the dead was undertaken in Corinth in the first century CE. This practice was, however, practised in the second century CE amongst heretics. This is attested by Chrysostom acknowledging that the Marcionites adopted the practice of vicarious baptism as a custom. “When any Catechumen departs this life...if he/she wishes to receive baptism...thus they baptise him/her in the stead of the departed one” (Chrys. \textit{Hom. Epist. I ad Cor.} 40.1) (Conzelmann, \textit{1 Corinthians}, 275, 276 n. 117). Some scholars do not explain clearly their positions in this debate (see Hays, \textit{First Corinthians}, 267; Bruce, \textit{I & II Corinthians}, 148-49). In this thesis, however, I am more concerned to investigate the attitudes towards baptism of the Corinthians in relation to their consideration of the Christian ekklēsia as analogous to a sort of collegia tenuiorum, and explore these attitudes as factors in causing divisions in the Corinthian congregation.

\textit{Conflict}, 294; similarly Conzelmann, \textit{1 Corinthians}, 275; Morris, \textit{1 Corinthians}, 214; Winter, \textit{After Paul Left}, 103-5).
veneration and commemoration towards their deceased ancestors and heroes and "invoked the protection of their...ancestors," and thereby believed themselves to be connected with the dead. In a similar sense, it seems that some Corinthian Christians appear to have understood Christian baptism in this way (1 Cor 15:29). They may well have understood that the baptism of their household included their dead ancestors (hoi nekroi) – whether they had believed or not before death, because they considered this ‘baptism for the dead’ as an appropriate public expression and extension of their veneration and commemoration toward dead ancestors (or ‘living spirits’). Performing such an inclusive ‘baptism for the dead’, they would have believed that they fulfilled the obligations and duties which, as living descendants, they had to exercise, and that in so doing they were connected and reunited with their dead.

Paul himself speaks of ‘baptism into Moses’ which is, in a sense, similar to such an inclusive and retrospective view of ‘baptism for the dead’, in 1 Corinthians

Wetherington, Conflict, 293 n. 10.) The Corinthians, and especially the Greeks and Romans who were preoccupied with the world of the dead, had a strong sense of obligation toward the deceased. The Romans and Greeks believed that it was their (the living’s) obligation (or duty) that in order to help their dead “become integrated in the realm of the dead,” they had to bury the dead properly and mourn adequately for them. Afterward, they commemorated the dead by visiting the grave and holding graveside feasts. They believed that “the dead could benefit directly from actions performed on their behalf, particularly at the grave” (DeMaris, “Corinthian Religion,” 663-4).

See Carolyn Osiek and David L. Balch, Families in the New Testament World: Households and House Churches (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 83. Domestic (household) cults were widespread in the first-century Greco-Roman world. Greeks and Romans commonly erected household shrines (lararium) or altars in their houses. Therein the people placed images or paintings of household spirits, and those of heroes and ancestors. They offered them animals and vegetables as sacrifice on a regular basis (See Ferguson, Backgrounds of Early Christianity, 168, 170, 176; also Rives, Religion in the Roman Empire, 119; Mikalson, Ancient Greek Religion, 133-36; for more details on domestic cults see Chapter Four below).

In 1 Corinthians 15, the Greek word nekroi with or without the article oi, refers to all the dead and all corpses in the grave, who are subject to mortality rather than only to deceased Christians (see Fee, First Corinthians, 776). Horsley supports the view that in certain Hellenistic circles...the words hoi nekroi refer to corpses which are distinctively separated from the soul (mind or spirit) (Horsley, 1 Corinthians, 201; cf. Patrick, who regards hoi nekroi only as the dead Christians and apostles named in 1 Corinthians 15:5-6 (“Living Rewards,” 74)).

My argument agrees with DeMaris in the sense that their attitude to baptism was related to the practices of first-century Corinthian religion, which were widespread in the wider society (“Corinthian Religion,” 661-82), but disagrees with him about ‘vicarious baptism’ for the dead in 1 Corinthians 15:29.
10:1-13 where he deals with the Israelites who travelled in the wilderness. He says, “Our fathers (or ancestors) were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and all were baptised into Moses in the cloud and in the sea” (1 Cor 10:1-2). Therein Paul clearly takes as an example his Jewish ancestors who were baptised into Moses as their leader and hero. Paul thereby venerates and commemorates the deeds of his Jewish ancestors and Moses. Some Corinthian Christians would probably have identified their view and practice of ‘baptism for their deceased’ with the idea of ‘baptism into Moses’ (1 Cor 10:2), if he had addressed this question regarding the ancestral Israelites to the Corinthian audience during his ministry in Corinth (1 Cor 10:1-13).

Furthermore, there is a significant distinction between Paul, who saw it as the body of Christ (1 Cor 12:25-27) and the temple of God (1 Cor 3:16-17), and those who saw it as a sort of collegia tenuiorum. It is clear, consequently, from the perspective of some in the Christian gatherings of Corinth that they did not see much difference between the ekklēsiai and other social collegia tenuiorum since they all

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97 Nonetheless, this argument may seem forced to some because in the biblical text Paul doesn’t in fact employ the Greek word nekroi at all. So it is rather likely that in this analogy Paul seems to assume a context in which ‘living’ Israelites were baptised into a ‘living’ Moses. He doesn’t simply describe the story of dead Israelites but appears to emphasise the vivid event of the Exodus of the Israelites who were (being) passing through the sea and were (being) travelling in the dessert (vv. 1-5). This is in itself an affirmation that the ‘dead ancestors’ are still seen as ‘living’ in some real sense.

98 It is worth noting that “the expression ‘baptised into Moses’ is nowhere to be found in Jewish sources; Paul has coined the phrase on the basis of Christian language” (Hays, First Corinthians, 160).

99 The issue of baptism appears to have been one of the underlying factors that caused the problem of factionalism in the Corinthian congregation. Paul uses the Greek word baptizō 10 times (1:13, 14, 15, 16 [twice], 17; 10:2; 12:13; 15:29 [twice]), but he uses it nowhere in 2 Corinthians at all. The word occurs only in the literary context where Paul addresses the problem of schisms, except for 10:2 “baptised into Moses.” Winter states, “1 Corinthians 1:13-17a suggests that some significance had been attached to the baptisms of those involved in strife and jealousy” (After Paul Left, 104). Witherington also comments, “1 Corinthians 15 (and esp. 15:29) manifests clear evidence of factionalism. Only some were saying ‘There is no resurrection of the dead’, others...were practising (‘baptism for the dead’)” (Conflict, 295 n. 20).

In 1 Corinthians 12, therefore, in order to encourage them to leave the spirit of factionalism, Paul challenges the whole Corinthian congregation, not just a few members, to understand their baptism into one body of Christ by one Spirit. He says, “We were all baptised into one body” (12:13, hēmeis pavtes eis hēn sōma ebaptisthēmen). Paul, in fact, baptised a few members, not the entire congregation, who were representatives of the major ethnic groups – Jews, Romans, and Greeks – during his ministry at Corinth (1 Cor 1:14-16; for more details see 2.2.3).
gathered together on a regular basis for social relationships, talked about funerals and burial of the dead and occasionally shared meals together (e.g. 1 Cor 11:17-34). One difference to other social collegia tenuiorum would have been that the Christians met together more frequently than once a month.\textsuperscript{100} Paul also strongly argued that the Christian ekklēsia was not just like a collegia tenuiorum formed for the purposes of arranging funerals and the appropriate burial of the dead. Rather, it was the body of Christ in which “there (was) no discord” and “the members (had) the same care for one another” (1 Cor 12:25-27). It was the temple of God in which “God’s Spirit dwells” (1 Cor 3:16-17). It was also more like a household (oikos) where God is the Father. The Corinthian Christians were His children, and should call themselves brothers and sisters and have household relationships under God as paterfamilias rather than patronal relationships (e.g. 1:16).\textsuperscript{101}

In 1 Corinthians 15:29 some of the Corinthian Christians appear to have denied the resurrection of the dead – and yet it does not necessarily mean that they did not believe in the resurrection of Christ.\textsuperscript{102} This is supported by Paul’s language in the wider context of 1 Corinthians 15:12-58: “How can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead” (1 Cor 15:12), and “some one will ask, ‘how are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?’” (v. 35)\textsuperscript{103} I argue that their denial of the resurrection of the dead is an indication that they were influenced, to some extent, by Greco-Roman religions (paganism) prevailing in the wider Corinthian society.

Some Christians of this group probably comprised wealthier and higher-social-status

\textsuperscript{100} Associations “may not meet together more than once a month…” (MacMullen, Roman Social Relations, 79).
\textsuperscript{101} For more details on the household see further below.
\textsuperscript{102} See Winter, After Paul Left, 105.
\textsuperscript{103} Paul poses these rhetorical questions, as confirmed by R.J. Sider who argues that "pōs is frequently used to introduce rhetorical questions which challenge or reject an idea” (Ronald J. Sider, “The Pauline Conception of the Resurrection Body in 1 Cor. 15:35-54,” NTS [1975], 428-39, esp. 429). D. Watson also argues that the section from v. 35 to the end of the chapter is composed of rhetorical pieces (Witherington, Conflict, 306), and Schmithals says that “it is seriously to be doubted that people in Corinth posed the questions in v. 35” (Conzelmann, 1 Corinthians, 280).
members. They, as I have argued, continued strong patron-client bonds with the Corinthian citizens who had power and control of the social and political positions in the wider society. They also conducted the religious festivals such as the Isthmian games and the imperial cult and adhered to Greco-Roman paganism. In doing this, they continued “strong ties to pagan society” and were probably affected, to some degree, by Greco-Roman religious thoughts.¹⁰⁴

In Greco-Roman paganism people “did not place much stress on a blessed afterlife. (They thus thought that) religion was to be practiced for its present benefits such as health and safety.”¹⁰⁵ Yet they believed “in the immortality of the soul/spirit and the cessation of the body’s senses at death.”¹⁰⁶ In other words, there was no idea in Greco-Roman paganism that the dead would be raised or resurrected in bodily form (sôma) after being buried (e.g. 1 Cor 15:35). They considered the body as inferior to the soul/spirit (pneuma) in quality. For these reasons, the conceptions of resurrection of the dead and the resurrection body as addressed in 1 Corinthians 15 were completely enigmatic and problematical to people who adhered to such Greco-Roman religious thoughts.¹⁰⁷ This would be a puzzling issue for young Christians who were newly converted from such a Greco-Roman religious background.

Even though they were already converted to the Christian faith, some of the Corinthian Christians still expressed scepticism (or doubt) about Paul’s teaching on the resurrection of the dead because they adhered to misconceptions about the resurrection body, and had difficulty conceiving of the concept of bodily resurrection

¹⁰⁴Witherington, Conflict, 295. These Corinthian Christians did not have to be always the same ones as those who performed ‘baptism for the dead’ probably because of differences of social status, voluntary associations (collegia), and ethnic origin (similarly Witherington, Conflict, 295 n. 20).
¹⁰⁵Witherington, Conflict, 293.
¹⁰⁶Winter, After Paul Left, 104.
¹⁰⁷Ferguson comments that there was no idea of the resurrection of the dead…in most ancient Greco-Roman religions “outside some Jews and the Christians,” but the Zoroastrians had a concept of the resurrection of the flesh (Backgrounds of Early Christianity, 211-249).
as a reality. For them this was a major stumbling block, since a body in their thinking was “synonymous with mortality and corruptibility,” and thus unable to inherit immortality. Rather, it was more acceptable to them that a soul/spirit only is involved with immortality. On the contrary, Paul argues strongly that a body will also be involved in the event of the last triumph (1 Cor 15:54), and it shall then be transformed into eternity or immortality (1 Cor 15:52, 53). For Paul, it is clear that eternity or immortality involves both body (sōma) and spirit (pneuma). Thus, there is a significant distinction between Paul and this group of Corinthian Christians in understanding the matter of the resurrection of the dead. These Corinthian Christians were still attached to the idea of Greco-Roman thought and argued for the immortality of a soul/spirit and the mortality of a body. These different understandings about the resurrection of the dead may well have caused tension and conflict between Paul and them.

In 1 Corinthians 15, therefore, Paul appears to critique their scepticism about the resurrection of the dead. In reaction to this scepticism Paul insists that the Corinthian Christian gatherings are the ekklēsia of the God who raised Christ from the dead (1 Cor 15:15). He further challenges the Corinthian Christians to believe in the resurrection of their transformed dead bodies (nekroi) as a reality in the future (1 Cor 15:16-18) and preach the death and resurrection of Christ as the essence of the gospel, just as he did during his ministry at Corinth (1 Cor 15: 3-11). Paul also encourages them to “be steadfast, and immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord” Jesus Christ (15:58), “the first fruit of those who fall asleep” (15:20).

108 Witherington, Conflict, 306.
109 See Winter, After Paul Left, 104-5; also Witherington, Conflict, 307.
In summary, some of the Corinthian Christians (including some who may be termed Paul’s Corinthian ‘opponents’) were embedded in systems of patronage in their Christian community, just as their contemporary Corinthians were in the social clubs and associations such as the professional *collegia, collegia sodalicia, and collegia tenuiorum*. Those who possessed wealth and high social standing considered themselves as patrons of the Christian community and other fellow Christians as their clients and those who were poorer and of the lower social classes in particular. In the Christian *ekklēsia* they also assumed the ‘normal’ social stratification and patronal hierarchies among the members and continued to express their high social status and (probably unintentional) discrimination against other fellow Christians of lower social status such as slaves (*doulos*) (e.g. 1 Cor 1:26-31; 4:6-7, 8-10; 7:21-23). Apparently, from their point of view, the Christian *ekklēsia* could be seen as analogous to one of the *collegia sodalicia* and *collegia tenuiorum* where patron-client systems played a vital role in interconnecting between patrons and clients of various social levels within the *collegia*.

In reaction to what he sees as improper mentality and behaviour, Paul asserts that the Corinthian Christian *ekklēsia* is no less or more than the temple of God (*ho naos theou*, 1 Cor 3:16-17) where God the Father is worshiped as the Creator, not simply as a patron deity (1 Cor 8:4-6). Paul also refers to the Corinthian congregation as the body of Christ (*sōma christou*, 1 Cor 12:27). Christ crucified and raised is the essential and profound foundation of the Christian *ekklēsia* (1 Cor 1:18-24; 3:11). It is also seen as a faith community where Christ crucified as the wisdom and power of God and His gospel is considered core and central (1 Cor 1:18-24). This identity of the *ekklēsia* as temple of God and body of Christ stands over against any identification with Greco-Roman or imperial temples, and the feasting and immorality
associated with them. But we have noted that Paul is much more open to, and affirming of, any association with household (and, by implication, ancestral) identities. This will be significant for my further analysis below.

Lastly, Paul stresses that in the Corinthian Christian gatherings there shouldn’t be any social stratification, patronal hierarchies, discrimination, or boasting about social privilege among the members (e.g. 1 Cor 1:26, 28, 29; 3:21; 4:6-7; 7:21-22; 11:22). Instead, there must be unity and love in Christ among the members, equal treatment of all members whether of high social status or lower, and a high value placed on the proclamation of the gospel message in which the death and resurrection of Christ is central (1 Cor 1:17, 31; 2:1-5; 3:5-9; 12:25; 13:1-13). I now move on to a closer investigation of the relationship between these patron-client systems and the problem of schisms in the Corinthian congregation (1 Cor 1:10-12).

3.2.2 The Problem of Schisms (schismata): “I belong to Paul” (egō eimi Paulou) and “I belong to Apollos” (egō eimi Apollō) 112

We have seen that in first century Corinth, as in the wider Greco-Roman world, people of wealth and high social status used patronal systems to (re)produce their power in politics and extend their social influence within society. A person’s political power and social influence was measured according to the number of patronal networks and clients they had as a patron. In this social atmosphere, it was shameful if patrons of wealth and high social status did not have a good number of clients, 113 so they naturally desired to establish as many patronal networks as possible. This then caused them to have a spirit of rivalry and competition among themselves, to the

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112 I quote these words from the RSV.
113 See Malina and Rohrbaugh, Synoptic Gospels, 75.
extent of using invective and accusations to denounce and reproach one another. Such rhetorical exchanges characterised the civic life of the Greco-Roman world and Roman Corinth in the first century CE.114

I would argue that some of this spirit of rivalry and competition was brought into the Corinthian congregation by some of the Corinthian Christians. A few possessed wealth and high social status and had frequent contacts with Corinthians of full Roman citizenship and the highest social status at banquets in the wider Corinthian civic communities. They also were affected deeply by the social and cultural tendencies of patronal networks and rhetorical conventions, as typified by Cicero’s legacy (see 1 Cor 1:26), as I have argued.

In order to build their patronal networks, some of the Corinthian Christians of wealth and high social status would have approached and been approached by poorer and lower social-status fellow Christians wishing to become their clients, just as occurred in other social clubs and associations. The majority of the Corinthian Christians were poor and ranked low in the social pyramid.115 To these poor Christians, patronage was more than a social institution. It was a means of survival in the wider Corinthian civic society in which people were tightly tied by patron-client networks.116 Because of this, the poor Christians could hardly refuse the wealthy and high social-status Christians’ proposals. These wealthy Christians would find it hard not to use their patronal networks to take control of the Christian community and keep it under their authority after Paul had left Corinth. Such social-conventions-oriented behaviour would cause serious tensions with Paul and other fellow Christians, tensions which would then develop into schisms among the members in the

114See Marshall, Enmity, 35-90.
116See 2.2.1 above.
Corinthian Christian community. I here argue that from the perspective of patron-client relations and patronal hierarchies there were two major parties in the Christian community after Paul had left Corinth: the party of Paul and that of Apollos (3:4-6; 4:6), although there are initially four names given as the leaders of each party (1 Cor 1:12), and then three (3:22).

Paul names several Corinthian Christians in Romans and 1 Corinthians: Chloe, Crispus, Gaius, Stephanas, Prisca, Aquila, Fortunatus, Achaicus, Phoebe, and Erastus (1 Cor 1:11, 14-16; 16:15-20; Rom 16: 1, 23). I have argued that these were all prominent members of the Corinthian congregation. Nonetheless, it does not necessarily mean that all of those named belonged to the Pauline party (1 Cor 1:12; 3:4) – Gaius and Erastus probably did not (see below). Thus, whether these Corinthians actually used the slogan, “I belong to Paul” (1 Cor 1:12; 3:4) is doubtful, but it seems that Paul would be happy to include them in his party (e.g. 1 Cor 4:14-

117Paul was told of the problem of schisms in the Corinthian congregation initially by the people of Chloe (1:11). Hays states, “the divisions at Corinth shouldn’t necessarily be understood to be clearly organised parties” but more likely “inchoate dissentions and arguments brewing” among the members (Hays, First Corinthians, 22).

118My argument is supported by Pogoloff (see Logos and Sophia, 178; also 1.5). Witherington argues that it is doubtful that there was a Christ party in the Corinthian Christian community or that Peter actually visited the city of Corinth (Witherington, Conflict, 83, 87). Hays and Thiselton also have doubts about Peter’s presence at Corinth (Hays, First Corinthians, 22; Thiselton, First Corinthians, 128). I argue that the Christ party or the phrase “I belong to Christ” (christou, 1:12) was not used by the Corinthians, but that Paul himself added it to draw the Corinthians’ attention closer to the topic of Christ crucified and His gospel (vv. 17ff), and to introduce the issue of baptism that was also related to the divisions at Corinth (vv. 13b-16). This phrase leads naturally to the following rhetorical questions such as “Is Christ divided?” and “Was Paul crucified for you?” (v. 13; RSV). This argument is also supported in 3:23 where Paul distinguishes Christ’s group (christou) from all other human-oriented groups. In this way Paul emphasises that the Corinthian Christians as a whole belong only to Christ crucified, the Lord, rather than particular human leaders (3:18-23) (see Mitchell, Rhetoric of Reconciliation, 83-86; Thiselton, First Corinthians, 133). Paul insists that in God’s temple there must be no divisive parties and no “personal allegiance to particular leaders” (Hays, First Corinthians, 22), so that no one boasts about humans but about Christ crucified (3:21). Therefore, it is clear that the divisions at Corinth were not created by “clearly defined theological differences” but by personal preferences for particular leaders in the congregation, emulating the patronal networks of the wider society (Hays, First Corinthians, 22).

119For details about each of them see 2.2.3 above; also Witherington, Conflict, 30. It is worth noting that Paul omits Phoebe and Erastus in 1 Corinthians, although they were prominent members in the Corinthian Christian community. I suppose that Erastus and Phoebe were later converts than those named in 1 Corinthians or that the two were not directly related to the problem of schismata in the Corinthian congregation when Paul wrote 1 Corinthians. Phoebe in particular was a diakonos of the Christian community in Cenchreae rather than in Corinth (Rom 16:1).
17) at least for the rhetorical effect of their positive public naming as the letter is read to the community.

Thus Paul appears to have deliberately named these Corinthians and used the naming as part of his rhetorical strategy. He mentions some of the names of Corinthian Christians in 1 Corinthians explicitly to praise their commitment to the ministry of God in Corinth. Paul appreciates, for example, the household of Stephanas devoting themselves to the service of the saints and refreshing his spirit in association with Fortunatus and Achaicus (1 Cor 16:15-18). Paul also expresses his gratitude to Prisca and Aquila for risking their necks for his life (1 Cor 16:19; Rom 16:3-4).

On the other hand, Paul seems to have named some of the Corinthian congregation who argued against him in 1 Corinthians, to win them over, not to judge or blame them (e.g. 1 Cor 1:14). Yet he appears not to have publicly shamed anyone in the congregation but rather encourages the whole congregation to leave the unhelpful environment of factionalism and to be united in Christ. Paul says, “I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree and that there be no dissensions (schismata) among you but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgement” (1 Cor 1:10).

These Pauline words clearly indicate that after Paul had left Corinth, the Corinthian congregation split into groups (“it has been reported to me…that there is quarrelling (eris) among you, brothers and sisters,” 1 Cor 1:11). As I have argued, there were two major groups in the congregation: the Pauline group and that of Apollos (3:4-6; 4:6). The Pauline party would most likely have included a large number of Corinthian Christians who were poor and of lower social classes. Paul

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120Similarly K.K. Yeo argues that “the best approach for Paul is not to judge, or to praise one party, but to ‘talk it over’ with them” (Khiok-Khng Yeo, “The Rhetorical Hermeneutic of 1 Corinthians 8 and Chinese Ancestor Worship,” BI 2 [1994] 294-311, esp. 296).
121So does Winter (After Paul Left, 140).
explicitly identifies himself with these poorer and lower-status Christians for the sake of the gospel of Christ (1:26-28; 4:8-13). These poorer Christians were the ones at risk of being marginalised in the congregation and humiliated by other fellow Christians who continued to express their wealth and high social status in the Christian community (1 Cor 11:17-22). They are the “weak” \((asthenēs)\) of whom Paul speaks in 1 Corinthians 9:22-23, and identifies with in 4:10 (“we are fools for Christ’s sake…weak…and in disrepute”). It would not be surprising, therefore, to find a mutual identification between these poorer Christians and Paul.

On the other hand, the party of Apollos may well have included some other Corinthian Christians of wealth and high social status (1 Cor 1:26; 4:8) and poorer Christians who established patron-client bonds with these wealthier ones. I argue that Gaius and Erastus were probably amongst these wealthier Christians. Gaius appears to have been one of the wealthiest members in the Corinthian Christian community because only he is named as having a house big enough to accommodate the whole congregation (Rom 16:23). Poorer and lower social-status Christians were apparently humiliated at the Lord’s Supper undertaken in a house like his (e.g. 1 Cor 11:22), where only the wealthy were able to recline at table in the triclinium. Erastus was the city treasurer in Corinth (Rom 16:23). His high public office suggests that he was a major magistrate in the local government, socially powerful and ranking highly in the social pyramid of Roman Corinth.

The wealth and high social status that Gaius and Erastus possessed fits well in my argument that some of the Corinthian Christians had frequent contacts with Corinthians who had full Roman citizenship and power and control of the social

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123 See Murphy-O’Connor, *Paul’s Corinth*, 183-4; Lampe, “Corinthian Eucharistic Dinner Party,” 5-6; also 2.2.3 above.
124 For details about Gaius and Erastus see 2.2.3 above.
political positions in the Corinthian civic society. They were influenced heavily by the social and cultural value systems characterised by patronal networks and rhetorical conventions and influenced, to some degree, by Cicero’s legacy (see 1 Cor 2:1-5; 9). These Christians rose in social status to higher positions in the wider Corinthian civic communities by making considerable financial contributions to the city. This was the way to gain honour and prestige in the first century Greco-Roman world.125

In a similar manner, I argue that by using their money, these Christians were able to have leadership positions and naturally exercise control of the Christian community. They effectively became patrons of the Corinthian Christian ekklēsia. That is why they no doubt approached Paul and offered to establish patronal relationships with him, also offering him financial support. Nevertheless, Paul refused to accept their financial support (1 Cor 9:12, 15-19), since he was aware of the hidden implications of their monetary gift. He suspected that they wished to put the congregation under their control by using their wealth, social status, and patronal hierarchies (cf. 2 Cor 11:7-11; 12:13-18).

Paul’s refusal of their proposal did not make sense to them at all because in Greco-Roman culture all teachers received remuneration from their students.126 Similarly, “a genuine apostle would accept full payment.”127 Paul himself knew this, as is evident in the fact that he received monetary gifts from the Macedonian Christians (2 Cor 11:9) and that he did not criticise the other apostles and Cephas who accepted financial gifts from Christians (1 Cor 9:3-7).128 Paul, however, refused to accept the Corinthian Christians’ patronage (with the exception of Phoebe [see Rom

125Pogoloff, Logos and Sophia, 193.
126Winter, After Paul Left, 36.
and financial support during his stay at Corinth. He did not build patronal relationships with them (1 Cor 9:15). Sze-Kar Wan argues that the inconsistency in Paul’s actions regarding financial gifts caused some of the Corinthian Christians to oppose him.\textsuperscript{129}

There are two possible reasons for Paul’s refusal of the Corinthians’ financial support: first, Paul did not want to put an obstacle and stumbling block in the way of the gospel of Jesus Christ crucified (1 Cor 9:12). He did not want to “burden the Corinthians or take advantage of them in anyway. As their ‘parent’ in Christ, he wanted to give to them rather than receive from them” (2 Cor 11:9; 12:14-18).\textsuperscript{130}

Second, Paul was aware of the social and cultural tendencies of Roman Corinth and the mentality and behaviour of some of the Corinthian Christians who were influenced deeply by the wider social and cultural value systems. He saw in the Corinthians’ offer of financial support that they were affected deeply by the social phenomenon of patron-client systems and social mobility through money. He did not want them to implicate him and take advantage of their patronal networks, thereby enhancing their social privilege in the Christian community. Rather, he reminded them that their social privilege and patronal systems did not ensure leadership positions and give them the right to take control of the Christian ekklēsia (1 Cor 1:26-29). Furthermore, Paul appealed to them to make a pure commitment to the gospel of Christ crucified and the Christian mission rather than give high value to worldly wisdom, economic possessions and social status (1 Cor 4:1). He also insisted that the gospel message of Christ crucified, the wisdom and power of God, must be preached to everyone free of charge (1 Cor 9:15-18).

\textsuperscript{129}Wan, \textit{Power in Weakness}, 29.
\textsuperscript{130}Everts, “Financial Support,” 296.
Instead of receiving financial support from the Corinthians, Paul worked as a leather-worker/tent-maker to support himself (see Acts 18:1-3). He recognised that “this sort of menial labour” and “low-status occupation” did not at all fit him as a truly authentic apostle in the light of Greco-Roman culture (1 Cor 9:7). His attitude differed from that of other itinerant Christian teachers and preachers who visited Roman Corinth. They acted like “respectable philosophical teachers” and rhetoricians, and received momentary gifts from wealthy members of the Corinthian Christian community. Nevertheless, Paul did not act like them. He rather conducted himself like an uneducated, poor, and low social-status person (e.g. 1 Cor 4:10-12). Hence, it seems that some in the Corinthian ekklēsia did not regard Paul as their leader at all. Moreover, they suspected the genuineness of his apostleship. To them “he was not in any true sense an apostle.”

Paul argued against their suspicions regarding his apostleship. He defended (apologeomai) his apostleship and asked the following rhetorical questions, “Am I not free?” “Am I not an apostle?” (ouk eimi apostolos;) “Have I not seen Jesus our Lord?” (1 Cor 9:1). With these rhetorical questions, Paul asserted that he was a free apostle who offered and proclaimed the gospel message to all people free of charge for Christ’s sake. He chose to make no use of the right that “those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel” (1 Cor 9:12-14). Further, Paul contended that he was a truly authentic apostle because he encountered the risen Christ Jesus the Lord, just as the other apostles and Cephas had (1 Cor 15:5-8; cf. Gal 1:12, 23-24). He had established the Corinthian Christian community based on the gospel of Jesus

131 Hays, First Corinthians, 147
132 Hays, First Corinthians, 147.
133 Barnet, “Apostle,” 49.
Christ crucified and resurrected (1 Cor 1:17-18; 15:3-4). Thus, Paul reminds the Corinthians that they are the “seal” of his authentic apostleship (1 Cor 9:2).\(^{134}\)

It is suggested in 1 Corinthian 9:5-6 that of the apostles and the Christian teachers and preachers who came to Corinth, only Barnabas and Paul did not accept monetary gifts from the Corinthians but worked for a living (v. 6). After Paul’s departure, it appears that Apollos, an Alexandrian, came to Corinth (Acts 18:24, 27:19:1). Clearly, Apollos was one of these Christian teachers who accepted financial support from some wealthier members of the Corinthian congregation. Nevertheless, Paul did not criticise him at all.\(^{135}\) These wealthier Corinthian Christians, who had been refused their offer of patronage by Paul, may well have approached Apollos and suggested supporting him financially. He seems to have accepted their financial support.

In this way, it can be proposed that these wealthier Corinthian Christians established patronal relationships with Apollos, supported him financially, and offered him accommodation. Naturally, they would have preferred Apollos as their Christian teacher and leader to Paul. They were a group that Paul describes as claiming, “I belong to Apollos” (*egō eimi Apollō*, 1Cor 1:12). Wealthier Christians like this seem most likely to have been leaders of the Apollos party (1 Cor 1:12; 3:4). The leaders of Apollos’ party can thus be seen as the Corinthians who brought patronal hierarchical structures into the Christian community, just as were exercised in other social clubs and associations. They were zealous (*zēlos*) about building patronal networks with other fellow Christians who were poorer and of lower social status (1 Cor 3:3), and caused striving and quarrelling (*erides*) between themselves.

\(^{134}\)Hays, *First Corinthians*, 149.

\(^{135}\)This is supported by Pogoloff (*Logos and Sophia*, 193) and Hays (*First Corinthians*, 147).
and Paul and leaders of the Pauline party (1:10; 3:3). They were the certain people who were “inflated with arrogance … (and) self-importance” and who did not welcome Paul’s subsequent visits to Corinth (1 Cor 4:18). They were also some of the people of whom Paul speaks in 1 Corinthians 1:26, referring to themselves as “wise” (sophoi), “powerful” (dynatoi), and “of noble birth” (eugeneis).

As the founder of the Corinthian congregation, Paul critiqued their improper behaviour. He strongly argued that the Christian community was not like the social associations and clubs, and should not adopt patronal hierarchical structures. Rather, it was more like a household (oikos) where God is the Father. The Corinthian Christians were His children, and should call themselves brothers and sisters and have household relationships under God as paterfamilias rather than be dominated by human patronal relationships (e.g. 1:16).

Paul frequently uses household words in 1 and 2 Corinthians: brothers, sisters, children, and father. The Pauline communities in the New Testament were house-based gatherings. Just like the other Christian communities in Rome and Asia Minor, the Corinthian Christians met together as a Christian ekklēsia in houses (oikoi) (see Rom 16:5; 1 Cor 16:19). That is why these Christian communities were called...

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136 Mitchell argues that the word eris is used frequently in Greek literature referring to political discord or strife and its causes (Mitchell, Rhetoric of Reconciliation, 81).

137 Thiselton, First Corinthians, 376.

138 It is important to note that Paul always describes the Christian ekklēsia together with the conception of household (oikos), like “the household of Stephanas” (ho oikos Stephanou in 1 Cor 1:16; cf. 16:15), differing from secular collegia. This is further evident in Paul’s household language, such as brothers or sisters, children, and father in 1 and 2 Corinthians. Like the Christians in Rome and Asia Minor, the Corinthians gathered as an ekklēsia in houses (oikoi) (Rom 16:5; 1 Cor 1:16) (for more details see Winter, After Paul Left, 206-11). Paul emphasises that in the Christian ekklēsia as the body of Christ, unlike secular ekklēsia and collegia, there should be intimate relationships like brothers and sisters and parents and children as a family under the parenthood of God the Father (Stephan J. Joubert, “Managing the Household: Paul as paterfamilias of the Christian Household group in Corinth” in Philip F. Esler [ed.], Modelling Early Christianity: Social-Scientific Studies of the New Testament in its Context [London; NY: Routledge, 1995], 213-23, esp. 217-8). These relationships differ from the patronal relationships that were widespread in the wider Corinthian civic society.

139 For details on the use of paterfamilias see below.

140 Scholars such as Jeffers assert that the factions as addressed in 1 Corinthians 1-4 resulted from the fact that the Corinthian Christian ekklēsia as a whole consisted of several smaller Christian gatherings...
oikos communities rather than collegia (1 Cor 1:16). Paul adopted household patterns for their basic structure, but with Christ as the paterfamilias.\footnote{See Stephen C. Barton, “Paul’s Sense of Place: An Anthropological Approach to Community Formation in Corinth,” NTS 32 (1986) 225-46, esp. 225, 243. In order to understand the conception of household in the first century Greco-Roman world it is worth noting that, as Jeffers states: “the first century household among the Greeks and Romans was defined in terms of the head of the family. The oldest male in the blood line of the family, was called the paterfamilias by the Romans. Every living thing over which he held authority was part of the household: relatives by blood, women who married blood relatives, slaves, former slaves, even livestock (Jeffers, Greco-Roman World, 82; similarly Rives, Religion in the Roman Empire, 117-22). Furthermore, it can be argued that the definition of first-century Greco-Roman households would have included the ‘living spirits’ of the ancestors that “were a part of family religion in the home” (Witherington, Conflict, 293). Particularly the spirit of the family head (Latin, genius; Greek, idios daimon) was understood as “the ancestral spirit playing the role of a guardian angel or attendant spirit” (Witherington, Conflict, 293 n. 10).} Paul describes Christ as the head of every man (1 Cor 11:3) and the head of the Christian ekklēsia (ho christos kephalē tēs ekklēsias) at least in the later Pauline tradition (cf. Eph 1:22; 5:23). Paul argues that as the foundation of the Christian community, Christ should have authority over the Christian community and take control of it, no one else, not even Paul, just as the paterfamilias in a Greco-Roman household (1 Cor 12:18).

For these reasons Paul apparently distinguished the Corinthian Christian ekklēsia from other secular ekklēsia and collegia that were characterised by patronal hierarchical structures, because the Christian ekklēsia was based on intimate family relationships under the parenthood of God the Father. In it, therefore, there must be unity among the members who should exercise the love of God the Father and Jesus Christ the Lord (1 Cor 13:1-13).\footnote{See Engberg-Pedersen, “Gospel and Social Practice,” 570.} Furthermore, Paul reminded the Corinthian Christians that he was their father in Jesus Christ though the gospel, and they were all his beloved children and offspring. They were all equal in his sight and the eyes of God, whether they were of high social status or the lower classes, and whether they were wealthy or poor (1 Cor 3:8). Their social status and economic possessions did not make any difference for them in serving Jesus Christ crucified as the wisdom and
power of God. Instead, as servants of God they were all required to exercise stewardship in the work of God (1 Cor 4:1, 2) and love one another as brothers and sisters in Christ (1 Cor 13:13). Lastly, Paul dares to suggest himself (ironically!) as patron of them all and urges them to imitate himself as their truly spiritual father in Christ (1 Cor 4:15, 16). We now turn to an analysis of patronal systems in relation to Paul’s description of the phrase *ho stauros christou* in 1 Corinthians 1-4.

### 3.2.3 The Cross of Christ (*ho stauros christou*)

Paul deals with the issue of the crucifixion of Christ in the broader context of schisms within 1 Corinthians 1-4. It is worth noting that he employs the Greek word *stauros* and its verbal form *stauroō* only in the first two chapters of 1 Corinthians 1-4.¹⁴³ In these two chapters, Paul addresses explicitly the issue of factionalism in the Corinthian congregation (1:10-12). This factionalism was directly caused by the improper mentality and behaviour of some of the Corinthian Christians who continued to express their wealth, high social status, and patronal hierarchies in the Christian community (see 1 Cor 11:22). They also valued social and cultural values of wisdom and eloquence more highly than Christ crucified as the wisdom of God (1 Cor 1:18; 2:1-5).

Clearly, Paul uses the word ‘the cross of Christ’ (*ho stauros christou*) in order to reclaim the Corinthian Congregation from the grips of factionalism (*schismata*). On one hand, the word ‘cross’ (*stauros*) is used in opposition to the words “wise” (*sophos*), “powerful” (*dynatos*), and “of noble birth” (*eugenē*) (1 Cor 1:26). These words represented the identity of people of education, wealth, and high social status in

¹⁴³The words occur 6 times in 1 Corinthians 1-2 (1:13, 17, 18, 23; 2:2, 8).
the Greco-Roman world in the first century CE. Hence, these words certainly refer to the Corinthian Christians of the higher social classes. On the other hand, the word *stauros* is associated with the words, “foolish” (*moros*), “weak” (*asthenēō*), “low” (*agenēs*), and “despised” (*exoutheneomenos*) (1 Cor 1:27-28). These words apparently describe the majority of the Corinthian Christians who were poor, uneducated, and of lower social classes.

Using the phrase *ho stauros christou* in 1 Corinthians 1-2, Paul begins his argument that Jesus Christ as the power of God, abandoned His glory and privilege in heaven and came down upon a cross (*stauros*), which is referred to as the curse of God (1 Cor 2:8; cf. Gal 3:10-14). Paul presents Christ crucified (*stauroō*), as the pattern and example that the Corinthian Christians should follow. The wealthier and higher social-status Corinthians should stop the uncritical expression of their social privilege in the Corinthian Christian *ekklēsia* (1 Cor 1:26-28). Moreover, they should turn their backs on factionalism and bring about an atmosphere of reconciliation in the Christian community that is the temple of God (1 Cor 3:16, 17) and the body of Christ (1 Cor 12:27). They should be “united in the same mind and the same judgement” (1 Cor 1:10).

Paul further appeals to some of the Corinthian Christians of wealth and of high social status and encourages them to imitate him as a pattern. He exercised the message of the cross of Christ in his everyday life, and sacrificed his social status for

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144 The original text is “Cursed (kekatramenos) by God (hupo theou) is every one hung on a tree” (LXX Deut 21:23). Paul must have had particular reasons why he omitted *upo theou* (“by God”) after *epikataratos* (“be cursed”) and why he referred to the original setting of Deuteronomy 21:23 in the context of a law-curse in relation to the death of Christ. As regards the former, by omitting *hupo theou* Paul intends to highlight “the absolute nature of the curse itself” rather than to avoid a direct saying that “Christ was cursed by God” (Longenecker, *Galatians*, 122). In my argument, in quoting Deuteronomy 21:23 Paul no doubt considers both its original context and the Jewish understanding of the language ‘hanging on a tree’. But, in connection with the death of Christ, Paul considers the latter more important than the former, because Paul in v.13 sees Christ’s death as the redemptive event to free those people who are under the curse of the law, and he also insists that only through the death of Christ can they participate in the blessing of Abraham (vv. 9, 14).
the sake of the gospel of Christ crucified, identifying with the majority of Corinthian Christians of the lower social classes. He worked with his hands at a trade as a tent-cloth maker and supported himself (see 1 Thess 2:9; Acts 18:3). This is attested in the Pauline descriptions in Corinthians 4:8-13: “We are weak” (v. 10). “We are in disrepute” (v. 10). “We labour, working with our own hands” (v. 12). “We are now as the refuse of the world, the offscouring of all things” (v. 13). 145

Moreover, Paul relates the phrase *ho stauros christou* to the ‘power’ (*dynamis*) of God. He knows that the word (*logos*) of the cross of Christ (*ho stauros christou*) appears as “foolish to those who were perishing” (1 Cor 1:18). It “looks like nonsense to a lost and perishing world” 146 for it had nothing to do with social privilege, and social and cultural values of wisdom and eloquence, which they regarded highly. Yet, it is the power of God in Paul’s argument (1 Cor 1:18). Christ’s crucifixion has the power of forgiveness, salvation, redemption, righteousness, and sanctification for those who believe in Christ crucified as Saviour and Lord (1 Cor 1:18, 30). 147 This is the power of God in Christ crucified. God chooses the “foolish,” the “weak,” the “low,” and the “despised” according to worldly and human standards, in order to shame the “wise,” the “strong,” and the “powerful” in the world and particularly in the Corinthian civic society (1 Cor 1: 26-28). Therefore, no one boasts about his/her wisdom and social privilege in the presence of God, but boasts of Christ crucified the wisdom of God and the power of God (1 Cor 1:24, 29, 30).

Finally, Paul reminds the Corinthian Christians of the Lord Jesus Christ who died on the cross (*stauros*) to reconcile them to God the Father (1 Cor 1:18, 21). The cross of Christ has the power of reconciliation (cf. 2 Cor 5:18-19). Paul believes that the message of the cross of Christ should give a challenge to the Corinthian Christians

145 For detail see further below.
146 Hays, *1 Corinthians*, 27.
147 See Pickett, *Cross in Corinth*, 58-84.
and reclaim them from the grips of factionalism. They would then be united in the one Spirit and the one body of Christ crucified (1 Cor 1:10; 12:12).

In summary, in 1 Corinthians 1-4 Paul addresses the problem of schismata that occurred in the Christian community at Corinth. I have shown that these two main schisms were closely related to the strong influence of patron-client relations that were so characteristic of the civic society of Roman Corinth in the mid-first century CE. The leaders of the Apollos party were influenced heavily by the social and cultural customs and value systems of the first century Greco-Roman world. Thus, they brought patronal and hierarchical structures into the Christian community and continued to boast (kauchaomai) about their wealth and high social status. They practised patronage too uncritically in the Christian ekklēsia, just as they did in social clubs and associations, taking advantage of the Christian community to elevate their social status in the wider Corinthian civic society. Paul, however, criticised sharply their misuse of patronal networks in the Christian community and regarded them as people of the “flesh” (hōs sarkinois) and as “babes in Christ” (hōs nēpiois en christō; 1 Cor 3:1). Furthermore, he asserted that the Corinthian Christians should relate to one another in terms of household (oikos) relationships under God as paterfamilias. They should understand themselves as brothers and sisters in Christ crucified rather than as patrons and clients. Therefore, they should leave factionalism, and should all be united in one Spirit and the one body of Christ crucified. We now turn to an examination of Paul’s rhetorical strategy in response to the Corinthian problems as addressed in 1 Corinthian 1-4.
3.3 Paul’s Subversive Rhetorical Response to the Corinthian Problems

When Paul hears reports of such divisive and discriminatory behaviour amongst the Corinthian Christians (1 Cor 1:11), he responds with emotion and even anger (1:10, “I appeal to you”). To Paul it was unthinkable that in a Christian community seen as “God’s temple” (to naon tou theou in 3:16-17) and “the body of Christ” (to sōma christou in 12:27), some wealthy members of higher social standing humiliated and discriminated against others of lower classes (11:22).

When he stayed at Corinth, Paul claims that he taught them the gospel message of Jesus Christ only (1 Cor 2:2, “I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ crucified”). He did not use his social status. Paul indeed belonged, in some respects, to an upper class. For the ministry of God, however, he rather “stepped down the social ladder” and identified with the people of low social status, and worked with his hands at a trade as a tent-cloth maker and supported himself (e.g. 1 Thess 2:9, “labour”; Acts 18:3, “leather-worker”). This is certainly evident in the

148Ronal F. Hock argues that the language of Paul in 1 Corinthians 9:19 (“Therefore, although I am free from all persons, I have enslaved myself to all, in order that I might gain more converts”), and 2 Corinthians 11:7 (“Did I commit a sin by demeaning myself, in order that you might be exalted, because I preached God’s gospel to you free of charge”), confirms his social status. Hock claims that only people of the higher classes could use such language, not people of the lower status. Therefore, it is clear that Paul came from one of the higher social classes. Nevertheless, he worked as a leather-worker (or tent-maker) to support himself financially in order to preach God’s gospel free of charge, even though some would regard his work as slavish and demeaning. This was so typical amongst higher class Greeks and Romans in the Greco-Roman world. For example, Musonius Rufus and Dio Chrysostom alike belonged to the upper classes and were exiled. Both worked with their hands to support themselves during their exile. “Musonius worked on a farm. Dio worked all sorts of menial jobs, such as painting, digging, and drawing water.” As such, Hock maintains that the Pauline language referring to his trade in 1 Corinthians 9:19 and 2 Corinthians 11:7 responds more closely to the attitude of higher class people toward the work than that of the lower (Ronald F. Hock, “Paul’s Tentmaking and the Problem of his Social Class,” JBL 97 [1978] 555-64, esp. 556, 562-4; cf. Cicero described a close relationship between people’s social status and their professions in his time [see Cicero, On Duties, 1.150-51]). Hock’s proposal is plausible, but I argue that Paul’s language in these two verses doesn’t necessarily represent his attitude to work. It rather appears to show what the Corinthian Christians may have thought of Paul in terms of his manual work.

149Ben Witherington III, The Paul Quest: the Renewed Search for the Jew of Tarsus (Downers Grove; Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 90, 128; see also Theissen, Social Setting, 104. Paul’s practice of a
Pauline language of 1 Corinthians 4:8-13, as follows: ἡμεῖς ἀσθενεῖς (“we are weak”)... ἡμεῖς ἀτιμοὶ (“we are in disgrace” or “we are disrepute”)... κοπιῶμεν ἐργαζόμενοι ταῖς ἰδιαίς χερσίν (“we wear ourselves out working with our own hands”) 150... ἡδος περικαθάρματα τοῦ κόσμου ἐγενήθημεν, παντὸν περὶπσήμα ἥος ἀρτί (“we are treated as the scum or garbage of the earth, the dregs or off-scouring of the world, to this every day”) (1 Cor 4:10-13). 151 Here, it is clear that Paul was

贸易作为皮革工人的工作给他自由和自足。他传扬福音信息免费（1 Cor 9:18, “I may make the gospel free of charge”), and he was, to some extent, freed from the need of financial support and patronage (e.g. 2 Cor 9:1-15) (see Ronald F. Hock, The Social Context of Pauline Ministry: Tentmaking and Apostleship [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980], 68). “It was part of his strategy of being all things to all persons so that he might by all means reach some” (Witherington, Paul Quest, 129).

150 In the time of Paul, the practice of a trade amongst Jewish men was not uncommon, since it was a Rabbincian ideal to combine Torah and trade. The Jew who devoted himself to the study of Torah also learned and practised a trade for the sake of his independence. So many Rabbis practised a trade (See Hock, “Paul’s Tentmaking,” 557; Social Context of Paul’s Ministry, 21-22; Shimon Applebaum, “The Social and Economic Status of the Jews in the Diaspora,” in S. Safrai and M. Stern (eds), The Jewish People in the First Century: Historical Geography, Political History, Social, Cultural, and Religious Life, and Institutions (Assen: Amsterdam: Van Gorcum, 1976), 701-27, esp. 716). Because of this, T.D. Still argues for Jewish parallels with Paul’s idea of labour in 1 Corinthians 1-4 (for more details see Todd D. Still “Did Paul Loathe Manual Labour? Revising the Work of Ronald F. Hock on the Apostle’s Tentmaking and Social Class,” JBL 125 [2006] 781-95, esp. 291-95). Nonetheless, I would argue that the most important context in which to interpret 1 Corinthians 4:12 and the word “labour” or the phrase “working with our own hands” is the Greco-Roman Corinthian context, in which Paul is stepping down the social ladder to maintain his profession as a leather-worker (Acts 18:3). Paul himself has a robust Jewish view of the value of a trade, but he knows that the Greco-Roman perception of manual work is very different, and he plays on this.

151 The two Greek words περικαθάρματα and περὶπσήμα are used synonymously. They refer to “sweeping” or “scraping” or “off-scouring,” that is to say, what is removed from the floor in the procedure of cleaning, such as “sawdust,” “scrapings of any sort,” and any dirt from “floor-sweepings” (John Calvin, I Corinthians. Calvin’s New Testament Commentaries, D.W. Torrance and T.F. Torrance [eds], and John W. Fraser [trans]. [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; Carlisle: The Paternoster Press, 1996], 95; Thielson, First Corinthians, 364; Fee, First Corinthians, 180; Witherington, Conflict, 146; Morris, I Corinthians, 79). Some scholars argue that the word περικαθάρματα refers to “cleansings” and “expiations” in the context of a scapegoat in particular (Calvin, I Corinthians, 95; Witherington, Conflict, 146; Barrett, First Corinthians, 112-3).

These words occur nowhere else in the NT and the Septuagint, but in Greek literature in particular the word καθάρματα or περικαθάρματα was usually employed to mean the ‘scapegoat’ type of sacrificial victim who was thrown out and sacrificed to a god to appease the god (Bruce, I & 2 Corinthians, 51; Barrett, First Corinthians, 112-3; Calvin, I Corinthians, 95; Thielson, First Corinthians, 364; Fee, First Corinthians, 180; Witherington, Conflict, 146). Using these words Paul seems to remind his Corinthian leaders of an expiatory rite normally known to the Greeks. A criminal was dedicated to a god, and the criminal was then dragged from corner to corner all over the city. People believed that in doing so, the person with him/herself took away the evil and sins that were lurking in the whole city. The criminal was handed over to a god to appease the god and then cleanse the rest of the inhabitants completely. The criminal was a scapegoat or sacrificial victim for atonement of the entire city (Calvin, I Corinthians, 95; Thielson, First Corinthians, 364).

Additionally, using these words Paul borrowed ideas from the LXX, especially Proverbs 21:18 (“the wicked become a ransom for the righteous” [NIV]; the Hebrew word kopher normally refers to “appease,” “make amends,” “provide reconciliation or atonement for some one by an offering” [William L. Holladay (ed.), A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament: Based on
prepared to empty himself of his social privileges and classify himself with people of much lower status for the work of Christ.

Subsequently, demonstrating his own rhetorical prowess (at least in written form, 2 Cor 10:9-10), Paul turns the tables upside down. He suddenly changes his tone. As seen above, Paul classified himself with those Corinthians ranked low on the social scale, but now he claims the Corinthian Christians as his children and depicts himself as their father – their *paterfamilias* (1 Cor 4:15). In order to help us know how much this depiction would confront the Corinthians, it is worth noting that in 1 Corinthians as a whole Paul frequently calls them *adelphoi* (‘brothers’ or ‘sisters’) (e.g. 1:10, 11, 26; 2:1; 3:1; 4:6; 7:24, 29; 10:1; 11:33; 12:1; 14:6, 20, 26, 39; 15:1, 31, 50, 58; 16:15). In 1 Corinthians Paul sees the Corinthians as ranked at the same social standing as his own, but at this time his attitude changes. He depicts the Corinthians as his children and himself as their father only here in 1 Corinthians 4:15, though in 2 Corinthians he also describes them as children (e.g. 6:13; 12:14). With this description he seems to consider them – ‘in Christ’ – as lower than himself in the social pyramid. In other words, he claims this spiritually high status to admonish his Corinthian ‘opponents’ and further correct their unjust behaviour in ill-treating and humiliating the members of lower social standing within the Corinthian congregation.

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*the First, Second and Third Editions of the Koehle-Baumgartner Lexicon in Veteris Testamenti Libros* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 163; Lamentations 3:45, “you have made us an off-scouring and refuse of in the midst of the peoples” [KJV]; and Isaiah 53:3, “He was despised, he shrank from the sight of persons, tormented and humbled by suffering; we despised him, we held him of no account, a thing from which persons turn away their eyes” [NEB]) (see A. Hanson, “1 Corinthians 4:13b and Lamentations 3:45,” *ExQ* 93 [1982] 214-5; Hay, First Corinthians, 73; Calvin, 1 Corinthians, 95; Thielton, First Corinthians, 364; Fee, First Corinthians, 180; Morris, 1 Corinthians, 79; Barrett, First Corinthians, 113).

Furthermore, it is likely that in this particular context (1 Cor 4:8-13), by employing the two Greek words *perikatharmata* and *peripsēma* Paul keeps in mind the crucifixion of Jesus Christ and His humiliation on the cross. He also intends to parallel the life of Jesus with the current situation of his colleagues and himself. They have dedicated their whole life to the work of Christ, although they hunger and thirst and are persecuted and slandered. On the other hand, it seems that in terms of social stratification contrasting with some of the Corinthian Christians who possess high social status (e.g. “wise,” ‘strong,” and “honour” in 4: 10) Paul intentionally regards his own social standing as low and then identifies with the people of lower status.
For rhetorical effect, Paul claims to be the patriarch and patron of them all. In other words, he deflates their hierarchies and challenges patronal systems by pulling rank on his ‘opponents’ as a ‘humble father’ of them all.

He then appeals to them to imitate him (mimētai mou, its verbal form is mimeomai) (1 Cor 4:14-16). This is Paul’s ironic use of imitation. In this passage Paul uses the word mimētēs in close relation to the singular form of egō (v. 16). In so doing, Paul claims that the Corinthian Christians shouldn’t imitate any other teachers or leaders in the congregation, but him. Some of these leaders may well have been influenced, to some extent, by the way the Corinthian elite of full Roman citizenship imitated the way Cicero had boasted of the glories of rhetoric. These leaders would also have been influenced, to a certain degree, by the way Cicero had encouraged the Romans to imitate their ancestors, as recorded in his rhetorical handbooks. In a similar manner, these leaders may well have obliged some Corinthian Christians of lower social status to imitate them as a model of wisdom and eloquence in the Corinthian Christian community. Paul, however, reacts against their behaviour. In the imperative tone, Paul differentiates himself from these leaders. He was the founder of the Christian community at Corinth. Depicting himself as their father, he claims an even higher social status – albeit ironically, and ‘in Christ’ (1 Cor 4:15). He, however, sacrificed his social status for the sake of the mission of Christ, even though his life was full of hardship and sufferings (1 Cor 14:11-13) similar to that of Christ. Paul appeals to the Corinthian Christians to imitate the way he lived out the humility and

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152 The Greek word mimētēs and its verbal form mimeomai occurs 7 times in 1 Corinthians (4:16; 11:1) and also in the deuto-Pauline literature (1 Th 1:6; 2:14; 2 Th 3:7, 9; Eph 5:1). In Greco-Roman culture the word mimētēs meant “bringing to expression, representation, and portrayal. It implies the notion of transfer of character or personality from one person to another, e.g. from parents to children, from teacher to pupil, and from God to human beings” (Boykin Sanders, “Imitating Paul: 1 Cor 4:16,” HTR 74 [1981], 353-63, esp. 358). It is interesting to observe that in 1 Corinthians 4:16; 11:1 the word mimētēs is used with the singular form of egō, whereas it is employed with its plural form in 1 Th 1:6 and 2 Th 3:7, 9. It is also used with the word theos in Eph 5:1 and with the phrase tôn ekkléśión tou theou in 1 Th 2:14.

153 For details on Cicero’s use of imitation, see 2.1 above.
suffering of Christ for the sake of the gospel of Christ crucified, rather than the way his ‘opponents’ boasted about their wealth and high social status.

Furthermore, for a better understanding of 1 Corinthians 4:16 it is important to note that in conjunction with the preceding passage (4:9-13), Paul urges the Corinthians to be aware of his suffering for Christ’s sake. He parallels it with the suffering of Jesus Christ crucified. Clearly, he appeals to them to imitate his sacrificial life as a servant of Christ (vv. 8-13) and his prioritising of the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ crucified in his ministry (e.g. 1 Cor 1:18-25). He also warns them against allowing their behaviour to be influenced uncritically by the social and rhetorical customs and value systems of the wider civic society. By saying that *parakalō…humas, mimētai mou gineste* ("I appeal to you to become imitators of me"), therefore, Paul claims that in the Corinthian Christian community as the body (*sōma*) of Christ (e.g. 1 Cor 12) there must be no humiliation nor discrimination nor social hierarchy, but there should be a spirit of sacrifice and love amongst the members for Christ’s sake (1 Cor 13).

Paul uses household language to describe the relationship between the Corinthians and himself. I argue that Paul uses here the phrases *tekna mou agapēta* ("my beloved children"[RSV]) and *murious paidagōgous* ("countless guides” [RSV]) in order to describe, from a mischievous rhetorical perspective, the Corinthian Christians as ranked lower in the social pyramid than himself, claiming to be (‘in Christ’) one of their few ‘fathers’ (*patēr*, 1 Cor 5:15). He briefly claims this high social position in contrast to his usual attitude of identifying himself with people of

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155 In the Greco-Roman culture of Paul’s day the relationship between a father and his children was seen as “the relationship of authority and subordination...Roman fathers had extraordinary power over their children...” (Stambaugh and Balch, *Social Environment*, 123-4). “The father maintained power over his adult sons until his death” (Jeffers, *Greco-Roman World*, 81-2).
lower classes (1 Cor 4:8-13) for the purpose of his argument. Paul now pokes fun at their patriarchal hierarchies. Here is a huge irony. Paul claims to be the patriarch in order to attack the patriarchs. Paul here uses the word ‘father’ (patēr) metaphorically in order to identify himself as one of the few ‘fathers’ in the Corinthian Congregation. He refers to the murious paidagōgous (‘many guides’) in order to relativise the authority of others claiming to have teaching authority. In exercising his authority as the founder of the Christian community at Corinth, Paul was challenging the Corinthians’ unfair behaviour in mistreating their fellow Christians of lower social status.

Further, Paul reclaims his authority as the founder and father of the whole Corinthian congregation (“my beloved children”; tekna mou agapēta in 4:14) to remind the Corinthians that the other leaders were paidagōgous who acted within his instructions. This is because he intends to correct some of the Corinthians who misunderstood that these leaders, and teachers such as Apollos, possessed higher social status and better rhetorical skills and eloquence than Paul (e.g. 1 Cor 1:26; “wise,” “powerful,” and “of noble birth” in 1 Cor 1:26; en petioi sophias logoi in 1 Cor 2:4; cf. 2 Cor 11:6). That is why, rather than Paul, they claimed Apollos as their leader, because of the strong influence of the social and rhetorical milieu of first century Corinth (“according to worldly standards” in 1:26; 1 Cor 3:4).

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156 See Martin, Corinthian Body, 66.
157 This Greek word occurs three times in the NT as a whole. Interestingly, it is found only in Paul’s epistles. The word appears once in 1 Corinthians 4:15 and twice in Gal 3:24-5 where he uses the word in a metaphorical sense referring to the Torah (see Ben Witherington III, Grace in Galatia: A Commentary on Paul’s Letter to the Galatians [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998], 262-7). In ancient Greco-Roman culture the Greek word paidagōgós referred to a servile class in the social pyramid. The paidagōgos supervised, escorted, protected, guided, and accompanied a child aged from six or seven to twelve according to the master’s instruction, when the child went to school and came back from it. Hence, in Paul’s time, the paidagōgos was not seen as teacher as such, but as “caretaker” and “trusted slave” (Martin, Corinthian Body, 66; similarly argued by Thiselton, First Corinthians, 370; Hay, First Corinthians, 73; Fee, First Corinthians, 185; Morris, 1 Corinthians, 80; Barrett, First Corinthians, 115).
This is one of the substantial causes of divisions within the Corinthian congregation (1 Cor 1:10). In order to reclaim the Corinthians from the spirit of factionalism, therefore, Paul claims in this passage that he is the spiritual father (\textit{pater}) of the Corinthian Christians, by reminding them that he can claim higher social status than them in Christ, if they wish to play such games. Paul further wished to remind them of their unity as a household (\textit{oikos}) and the body of Christ (\textit{to sōma christou}; 1 Cor 12:12-31)\(^\text{158}\) rather than simply as an \textit{ekklēsia}.\(^\text{159}\) Such an understanding is important for overcoming the problem of schisms and the nature of \textit{sophia} as addressed in 1 Corinthians 1-4.

### 3.4 Summary of the Rhetorical and Social Analysis of 1 Corinthians 1-4

I have reconstructed the social and rhetorical environment of 1 Corinthians 1-4, which has led me to the conclusion that this Pauline text critically engages the consequences

\(^{158}\)The Greek word \textit{sōma} is one of the most important words in understanding the problematic issues in 1 Corinthians (E. Earle Ellis, “Soma in First Corinthians,” \textit{Interpretation} 44 (1990) 132-43, esp. 133; James D.G. Dunn, \textit{The Theology of Paul the Apostle} (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 70-3; Robert H. Gundry, \textit{Soma in Biblical Theology with Emphasis on Pauline Anthropology} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976); Martin, \textit{Corinthian Body}, 125-8, 194-7). It appears 46 times in 1 Corinthians as a whole. It has at least four possible meanings as follows: firstly, it simply means “a living body of a human being” in 5:3; 12:12, 15, 16, 17; 15:44. Secondly, it means a body of a “plant and seed structure” in 15:35. Thirdly, it means “a unified group of people” in 10:17. Lastly, it means the Christian \textit{ekklēsia} as “the body of Christ” in chapter 12 (BAGD, 983-4). The word \textit{sōma} here refers to the first one and the third one, the Christian gatherings as the living body of Christ.

\(^{159}\)This idea is similar to Trevor J. Burke’s argument. He argues that in an effort to “prevent further divisions, Paul at a strategic point in the letter (chapters 1-4) employs the father-child metaphor in order to unite the Corinthians under himself as their common \textit{pater}. As the founder-father of the community Paul expects his children to heed his position, submit to his authority, follow his example, obey his instructions and be aware of his love for them” (Trevor J. Burke, “Paul’s Role as ‘Father’ to his Corinthian ‘Children’ in Socio-Historical Context [I Corinthians 4:14-21]” in Trevor J. Burke and J.K. Elliot [eds], \textit{Paul and the Corinthians: Studies on Community in Conflict: Essays in Honour of Margaret Thrall} [Leiden: Brill, 2003], 95-113). I argue that Paul used the father-child metaphor in order to reclaim the Corinthians from the atmosphere of factionalism that was influenced by hierarchical systems in the wider civic society of first century Corinth, but I also point to Paul’s rhetorical use of irony to make this argument and drive his point home. Paul was not establishing a spiritual patriarchy in order to replace biological patriarchy, but ironically undermining patriarchy altogether.
of an uncritical use of Greco-Roman rhetorical conventions and social and patronal networks that was evident in the improper mentality and behaviour of some in the Christian community. The language of 1 Corinthians 1-4 also reflects the social and ethnic composition of the Corinthian congregation, and argues for mutuality in diversity.

The ‘not many’ among the Corinthian Christians to whom Paul refers in 1 Corinthians 1:26-29 seems to have been closely related to the people whom Paul later addresses as “these arrogant people” (4:18-19), and it appears that these arrogant Corinthians were not keen for Paul to re-visit the Corinthian Christian ekklēsia. The evidence given indicates that these Corinthian Christians were among the elite in the Corinthian congregation and possessed wealth, power, and high social status in the wider civic community. They would have had frequent contacts with the group of full Roman citizens in the collegia of the wider society. Moreover, after Paul’s departure they continued to practise in the Christian community, elements of the social and cultural phenomena of the wider Corinthian civic society in the first century CE, including especially the social and rhetorical understandings of wisdom and eloquence and hierarchical patronal systems.

Paul draws distinctive contrasts between the wisdom of God and that of the world in 1 Corinthians 1-4 (e.g. 1:18-25; 2:6-7), wherein he appears to highlight intrinsic distinctions of quality between the two sorts of wisdom. I have argued that Paul refers to the wisdom of the world as a human-thought-based and cultural-conventions-oriented wisdom that dominated the thinking of some in the Corinthian Christian community. Their understandings of wisdom are consistent with the Greco-Roman rhetorical traditions, as typified by Cicero’s legacy of wisdom and eloquence, which affected the mentality and social behaviour of the Corinthians in the wider
civic community in the time of Paul (1:19; 2:6). Contrasting with this cultural-conventions-oriented wisdom Paul presents the wisdom of God as the ‘foolish’ yet powerful wisdom of Christ crucified. This sort of wisdom has a power that saves and transforms people who believe in Jesus Christ (1:21, 24; 2:7).

Paul seems to think that some of the Corinthian Christians not only valued the cultural-conventions-oriented wisdom more highly than Jesus Christ crucified as the wisdom of God, but even boasted about themselves as having such human-based wisdom (e.g. 1:29; 3:18; 4:7). To argue against this unhelpful conduct of boasting, Paul borrows the biblical teaching of boasting from Jeremiah 9:23. In so doing, Paul challenged the Corinthian Christians to leave their anthropocentric and social-and-cultural-conventions-oriented boasting and imitate him as one boasting in the Lord Jesus Christ as the wisdom of God. This is a theocentric and Christ-centred ‘boasting’ used by Paul for the purposes of cultural transformation and building up the ekklēsiai.

In the last chapter below, the preference for cultural-conventions-originated wisdom among some Corinthians and Paul’s reaction to it will be evaluated from a Korean-Confucian Christian context, where some Korean Christians adhere to ‘Korean-Confucianism-oriented’ wisdom and express its social implications in the Christian communities.160

Furthermore, I have investigated the problem of the schismata Paul addresses in 1 Corinthians 1:10 and 11:18 in close relation to patronal networks and collegia, which were significant influences on the social fabric of the Corinthians, whether believers or non-believers. This investigation led me to the argument that some of the Corinthian Christians continued the uncritical practice of patronage and continued to

160Strom initiates a dialogue between the issues of rhetoric and the Corinthians’ attitude to it, as addressed by Paul in 1 Cor, and an Australian context (see Strom, Reframing Paul, 190-95, 225-30). This is what I am also attempting in my Korean context, though on a less philosophical and more social level.
express patronal hierarchies in the Christian *ekklēsia*, just as they did in the *collegia*. They boasted about their social privilege in the Christian community and used their patronal connections with the Corinthian elite to take control of the leadership within the *ekklēsia*. They built patronal relationships with their fellow Christians who were poorer and of lower social classes and effectively discriminated against them (11:22). Moreover, they took advantage of the Christian community to build political power and social influence and to aspire to higher positions in the wider Corinthian civic society (1 Cor 9:1-18).

Such Corinthian believers appear to have regarded the Corinthian Christian *ekklēsia* as more of a sort of *collegia* where patron-client systems played a vital role in interconnecting between patrons and clients of various social levels within the *collegia*. Two consequences of this are proposed. First, in 1 Corinthians 8:1-10:22 Paul seems to argue against some of the Corinthian Christians who described themselves as people who possessed knowledge and boasted of it (8:1). In so doing, such Corinthian Christians seem to have justified their behaviour of participating in dinner parties and eating food sacrificed to deities in the temples and to the emperor in the imperial cult. There they effectively participated in sacrifices to the emperor and affirmed him as lord, saviour, and god, and implicitly worshipped him as the universal patron (8:5, 10). A reason why they behaved this way is, as I have argued, that they continued their membership in *collegia sodalicia* where they effectively worshipped gods as their patron deities and ate meat offered as sacrifices to the deities, even after conversion to the Christian faith (8:7, 10; 10:18-20). They may even have considered the Corinthian Christian community as another of the *collegia sodalicia* where they called on the name of the Christian God and the Lord Jesus Christ, and worshipped and venerated Him as their patron deity (1 Cor 8:4-5).
Furthermore, their eating meat offered to deities in the temples and to the emperor in the imperial cult carried the danger that it would wound the conscience of some weak Christians, although they might not necessarily intend or notice this (1 Cor 8:7).

Paul argues, however, that it is a sin against Christ to wound the conscience of the brothers and sisters in the Corinthian congregation (1 Cor 8:7-13). They should take care lest their behaviour become an obstacle to the weak (1 Cor 8:9), and cause the weak to fall (1 Cor 8:10, 13). Moreover, Paul defined their behaviour as idolatry and exhorted them to stop worshipping idols in the temples and the imperial cult (1 Cor 10:14), as distinct from eating meat in homes. He also used the traditional Jewish understanding that idolatry leads to immorality in order to condemn the social consequences of idol worship in the temples, where attendees and worshippers could become involved in sexual licentiousness (1 Cor 9:8-12; 10:1-13). Paul wanted to prevent the Corinthian Christians from practising such immorality (e.g. 1 Cor 5:9-11). These points will help re-interpret the Corinthian attitude to Greco-Roman gods and the imperial cult and Paul’s response to it from a Korean-Confucian Christian context, where Korean Christians were compelled to worship a Japanese emperor during Japanese imperialism in Korea from 1910 to 1945, and where many Koreans engage in household veneration of ancestors.

Furthermore, some Corinthian Christians may well have seen the Christian ekklēsia as more of a sort of collegia tenuiorum, formed for the purposes of arranging funerals and the appropriate burial of the dead. We have seen that this argument is supported by the first rhetorical question in 1 Corinthians 15:29, which implies that some of the Corinthian Christians engaged in a baptism on behalf of the dead in the Christian community. I have argued that they may well have understood their ‘household baptism’ (1 Cor 1:16) as including an appropriate public expression of
their veneration and commemoration toward dead ancestors (or ‘living spirits’). Practising this sort of inclusive baptism, they would have believed themselves to be fulfilling the obligations that they, as living descendants, had to exercise to be connected and reunited with their dead. Such an interpretation accords with the reason why the Corinthians in the wider society formed *collegia tenuiorum*. It suggests that the provision of an appropriate burial for the dead and ongoing recognition of them, was regarded as one of the duties which, as living descendants, the Corinthians had to practise towards their dead ancestors. In so doing, they expressed veneration for the dead. I have concluded, therefore, that some Corinthian Christians regarded the Christian *ekklēsia* as another sort of *collegia tenuiorum* in which people were interconnected by patronal networks even after death, and this is glimpsed in their understanding of baptism on behalf of the dead (1 Cor 15:29).

 Nonetheless, as the founder of the Corinthian congregation – and even ‘patron’ or ‘father’ on another level – Paul criticised the misuse of patronal networks in the Christian community. Yet he does not criticise the public expression of commemoration towards dead ancestors in 1 Corinthians (see further below). Paul instead strongly argued that the Christian community should not be understood as a social association or club (*collegia*), and should not reinforce patronal hierarchical structures. Rather, Paul uses the language of the household (*oikos*) where God is the only *paterfamilias*. For Paul, the *ekklēsia* should be established on intimate family relationships under the parenthood of God the Father. In it, therefore, there must be unity among the members who should exercise the love of God the Father and Jesus Christ the Lord (1 Cor 13:1-13). The implicit Pauline acceptance of the Corinthian expression of veneration towards dead ancestors has profound implications for a
Korean-Confucian Christian context in which ancestor veneration (jesa in Korean) is controversial among Korean Christians today (see further below).

I have also argued that underneath the factions named by Paul (which were most likely exaggerated for rhetorical effect) lay the party of Paul and that of Apollos (3:4-6; 4:6). The Pauline party would most likely have included a large number of Corinthian Christians who were poor and of lower social classes. Paul explicitly identifies himself with these poorer and lower-status Christians for the sake of the gospel of Christ (1:26-28; 4:8-13). These poorer Christians were the ones at risk of being marginalised in the congregation and humiliated by other fellow Christians who continued to express their wealth and high social status in the Christian community (1 Cor 11:17-22).

On the other hand, the party of Apollos may well have included some other Corinthian Christians of wealth and high social status – such as Gaius and Erastus, perhaps (1 Cor 1:26; 4:8; Rom 16:23), together with Christians who established patron-client bonds with these wealthier ones. The wealth and high social status that wealthier Corinthian Christians possessed supports my argument that some of the Corinthian Christians had frequent contacts with Corinthians who had full Roman citizenship and power, and control of the social political positions in the Corinthian civic society. They were therefore heavily influenced by the social and cultural value systems characterised by patronal networks and rhetorical conventions (1 Cor 2:1-5; 9).

We have seen that it is highly likely that such Christians would assume that Paul would establish patronal relationships with them, and so they naturally would have offered him financial support and hospitality. Nevertheless, Paul refused to accept their financial support (1 Cor 9:12, 15-19). He was aware of the complications
of the hidden intentions behind their monetary gift. He no doubt realised the danger that they would thereby keep the congregation under their control by using their wealth, social status, and patronal hierarchies (cf. 2 Cor 11:7-11; 12:13-18) in that way. So instead of receiving financial support from them, Paul insisted on working as a leather-worker/tent-maker to support himself (see Acts 18:1-3). Whereas he recognised that this kind of menial work did not really establish him as a truly authentic apostle in the eyes of Greco-Roman culture (1 Cor 9:7), he insisted that it embodied the ethics of the way of Jesus Christ.

It seems, however, that these wealthier Corinthian Christians established normal patronal relationships with Apollos, supported him financially, and offered him accommodation. Naturally then, they appreciated the ministry of Apollos as their Christian teacher and leader in preference to Paul. Paul even goes so far as to describe them as claiming, “I belong to Apollos” (ἐγώ εἰμι Ἀπόλλων, 1Cor 1:12). Wealthier Christians like this seem most likely to have been leaders and patrons of the Apollos party (1 Cor 1:12; 3:4).

I have argued that Paul’s subversive use of rhetoric would have challenged some of the Corinthian Christians of wealth and of high social status and encouraged them to imitate him as a pattern. He exercised the message of the cross of Christ in his everyday life. He voluntarily relinquished the privileges of his social status for the sake of the gospel of Christ crucified, and identified with the majority of Corinthian Christians of the lower social classes. He also reminds the Corinthian Christians of the Lord Jesus Christ who died on the cross to reconcile them to God the Father (1 Cor 1:18, 21). The cross of Christ has the power of reconciliation (12:12). Paul believed that the message of the cross of Christ should challenge the Corinthian Christians, transform their understanding of true wisdom, and reclaim them from the grips of
factionalism. They would then be united in the one Spirit and one body of Christ crucified (1 Cor 1:10; 12:12).

I have shown that ethnicity and social class were two further critical factors which caused the schisms in the Christian community (e.g. 1 Cor 1:10-11). Amongst the diversity of ethnic groups there would have been tensions and conflicts that contributed to the factions in the congregation. That is why in the passage where Paul deals with the issue of baptism in close relation to the problem of schism (1 Cor 1:10-17), he mentions explicitly the three prominent leaders Crispus, Gaius and Stephanas. This is because each of them represents the three major ethnic groups: Jews, Romans, and Greeks (vv. 14, 16). I have argued that Paul’s careful and deliberate naming of Stephanas (1 Cor 1:16; 16:15, 17) has the rhetorical effect of establishing him – as a representative of the poorer Greek majority – as a role model of service to the whole community (1 Cor 16:15-17).

In response to these conflicts, however, Paul insists on unity among the diversity of ethnic groups within the Corinthian Christian community. This is revealed in 1 Corinthians 12:12-13 where Paul encourages them to be united as one body of Christ who transcends ethnic and cultural barriers and distinctions (v. 12). He also appeals to them to be “baptised into one body” by one Spirit and to “drink of one Spirit” (v. 13). In these words, Paul seems to challenge them to leave the unhelpful behaviour of factionalism and not to claim any ethnic superiority and privilege in the Christian community. Instead, they are to be inspired by the Holy Spirit who brings them together as the body of Christ from different ethnic backgrounds, and they then are to reconcile and embrace one another and share the spirit of household and kinship in Jesus Christ. Yet this does not mean that the Corinthian Christians should give up their ethnic identities and cultural customs. Paul rather appears to encourage them to
keep their racial and cultural heritage within the Christian community (1 Cor 7:17-24). This Pauline message will be explored again in Chapter Four, where I will re-read the problem caused by Corinthian ethnic diversity and Paul’s reaction to it from a Korean-Confucian Christian context. This context is under the influence of the spirit of *danil minjok* that literally means one nation and also refers to a homogeneous race. This spirit continues to affect the mentality and social conduct of Korean Christians in some way today, and will be critically evaluated in the next chapter.

Furthermore, we have seen that the Pauline language of 1 Corinthians 1:26-28 reflects the wide range of social status to which the Corinthian Christians belonged. In the social pyramid of first-century Roman Corinth, some few members belonged to the higher classes and the vast majority to the lower classes. These social differences (and distinctions) between the Corinthian Christians may well have influenced the allocation of leadership positions in the Christian community. As I have argued in relation to patronal networks above, the Corinthian Christians who possessed high social status in the broader civic society could easily have dominated leadership roles and assumed the position of patrons of Paul and the congregation. This would leave the majority of the Corinthian Christians who were extremely poor and of lower social standing, isolated from the mainstream of church life and excluded from leadership positions – not to mention the best food at the love-feasts (1 Cor 11:22-23). Their social class prevented them from becoming leaders in the Christian community because rather than the gospel message and Christian teaching, social positions and

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161 I am aware that scholars such as Braxton argue that in 1 Cor 7:17-24 Paul responds to the Corinthian Christians who raised the issues of the circumcised/uncircumcised and slave/free because these issues caused the problem of schisms amongst the members in the Corinthian congregation (see Braxton, *Tyranny of Resolution: 1 Corinthians 7:17-24*, 9-154). Nonetheless, it appears more appropriate to me that these two illustrations are understood as examples of the confusion over appropriate boundary markers between the Corinthian Christians and the wider Corinthian community.
hierarchies and gifts of eloquence and tongues (1 Cor 12:8, 10) were regarded as more important.

To correct such unjust behaviour, Paul, as the ‘father’ of the whole congregation, ironically claims to be the patriarch and patron of them all (1 Cor 4:15). Paul here uses the word ‘father’ metaphorically in order to distinguish himself from nearly all the other leaders in the Corinthian congregation. He refers to most of them as the “countless guides” in order to show to the Corinthians that these leaders may in God’s eyes be ranked lower than himself (1 Cor 4:15). Paul then appeals to them to imitate him (1 Cor 4:16). This is Paul’s ironic use of imitation and boasting. In so doing, Paul undermines those Corinthian Christians who imitated other teachers and leaders in the congregation. He reacts against their behaviour. In the imperative tone (e.g. 1 Cor 4:16), Paul differentiates himself from these leaders. As the founder of the Christian community at Corinth, he depicts himself as their father and as possessing high social status according to the values of another ‘Empire’. He, however, forsakes this social status for the sake of the mission of Christ, even though his life was full of hardship and sufferings (1 Cor 14:11-13) similar to that of Christ. Paul appeals to the Corinthian Christians to imitate the way he lived out the humility and suffering of Christ for the sake of the gospel of Christ crucified rather than the way some of the Corinthians boasted about their wealth and high social status.

This social analysis of the Corinthian behaviour caused by social stratification and Paul’s reaction to it will now be evaluated, together with the other issues already raised, from a Korean-Confucian Christian context. In this context, some Christians who are poor and uneducated are excluded from leadership positions such as the eldership (jangro in Korean) and isolated from the decision-making groups in the
church. I will argue that this reflects the Confucian over-emphasis on wisdom, education and knowledge, and its social consequences.

So the analysis above has highlighted these different factors and their contributions to the problem that Paul addresses in 1 Corinthians and particularly chapters 1-4. Each of these factors played a critical part in dividing the Corinthian Christian ekklēsia into groups. I now turn to an evaluation of the rhetorical and social analysis of 1 Corinthians 1-4 from a Korean-Confucian Christian context, where there are also tensions and divisions between believers over the understanding of true wisdom and its social implications.