Chapter Four

An Evaluation of the Rhetorical and Social Analysis of 1 Corinthians 1-4 from a Korean-Confucian Christian Context

Thus far, this thesis has analysed the rhetorical and social situation of Roman Corinth in the first century and the social and ethnic makeup of the Corinthian Christian community. This enabled a re-evaluation of Paul’s response to the problems in the Corinthian ekklēsiai. The results of these investigations are now evaluated from a Korean-Confucian Christian context for contemporary Korean readers. In this process, the beginnings of a dialogue takes place between the issues concerning Paul and the Corinthian Christians in the first century and those concerning Korean Christians and their cultural heritage in the 21st century. Furthermore, there is the promise of biblical insight into the social and cultural issues that Korean-Confucian Christians face in their daily lives today not in the simplistic expectation that some acultural (or meta-cultural) biblical truth will tell Koreans what to do, but in the hope that a closer understanding of the ‘Gospel process’ in Corinth will suggest new possibilities for the Korean church. There are many analogies that can helpfully be drawn and intersections explored, between the issues addressed by Paul in 1 Corinthians and the issues facing contemporary Christians in Korea. There are many directions these engagements could take, but I will focus first on Korean wisdom (jeehyel sulgi) and its social consequences – education (gio yook) and social standing (sa he jak ji wi) – in Korean-Confucian society.

1In principle the issues addressed in Chapter Four cover all Korean Christians, whether Catholics or Protestants. Nonetheless, some of the issues tackled in the thesis, for example, ‘Shinto Shrine Worship’ and ‘Ancestor Veneration’, are no longer controversial in Korean Catholicism today, but still remain controversial in Korean Protestantism (see below). The issues of Confucian wisdom traditions and the spirit of danil minjok are both equally related to Korean Catholicism and Protestantism.
4.1 Wisdom (jeehye/sulgi) and its Social Manifestations in a Korean-Confucian Context and T’oegeye as an Example of Wisdom

Just as my investigations of Corinthian wisdom (sophia) involved an analysis of its social manifestations – patronal hierarchies and social stratification – so too will any explanation of wisdom traditions from another cultural perspective. This process requires an appreciation of the social and cultural expressions of wisdom in society, together with an engagement with the biblical perspectives and processes. It is appropriate, therefore, that I, as a Korean-Confucian Christian, should attempt to read and interpret from the perspective of my own Korean-Confucian context the Corinthians’ expressions of wisdom (sophia) and the Pauline critique of them as indicated in 1 Corinthians 1-4.

It is my contention that the Corinthians in the Greco-Roman world of the first century CE and the Koreans in the Confucian context of the 16th century and today have analogous attitudes towards wisdom and its social manifestations. Ancient philosophers and thinkers such as Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, and Seneca the younger valued wisdom (sophia and sapientia) and its children highly. Because of their legacies and influences, Paul accuses the Corinthians of valuing human wisdom and its social consequences more highly than Christ as the wisdom of God. So also in

\[\text{Unlike the Corinthians in the first-century Greco-Roman world, Koreans do not emphasise the importance of eloquence (or eloquent speech) and relate it to social privilege, because they consider written documents and exams more important than oral ones. In Korean society, in order to elevate one’s social status and take leadership positions, one should obtain good marks in the exams that the Korean government provides (gwa gu si hum or gong mu won si hum) or those of the giant-private companies (dae gi up yip sa si hum). Most of these exams comprise written exams, not oral ones. Hence, I neither employ a rhetorical method in this chapter nor include an investigation of Corinthian eloquence as such from a Korean-Confucian context. Nonetheless, it is worth noting that a cultural phenomenon of imitation which seems to be like Greco-Roman understandings of imitation appears in Korean mentality and social behaviour. Yet this sort of imitation doesn’t require an oral and rhetorical foundation. It is fundamental to the Korean ‘one nation’, ‘one people’ self-understanding (conformity). I will develop this in 4.4 below.}\]
Korean society of our time, wisdom (jeehye or sulgi) is highly regarded, which is evident in many current social phenomena.  

Philippe Thiébault expresses the high value of wisdom in Korean society when he asserts that “Korean thinkers, assimilating first classical Confucianism and enriching it with Neo-Confucianism, have taken seriously external and internal fulfilment, ‘wisdom (jeehye/sulgi) inside, kinship outside’.” This statement indicates that there is close relationship between wisdom traditions (jeehye/sulgi), Neo-Confucianism and social kinship patterns in Korean society. In other words, Neo-Confucianism has had and continues to have a deep impact on the shaping of wisdom traditions and society in Korea. Of all the Korean Neo-Confucian scholars, T’oegye (1501-1570) and his Confucian ideas of wisdom (jeehye/sulgi) is the most significant for understanding how today these factors still shape the social fabric of Korean Christianity. 

Since Confucianism was first introduced into the Korean peninsula thousands of years ago, it has greatly influenced Korean culture, including social relations, family structure, education, philosophy, religion, and the political and economic systems. There is no aspect of Korean culture that Confucianism has not influenced 

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3This is suggested even by the great number of Korean women who have had jeehye and sulgi as their first names. In other societies and cultures, such a phenomenon might well occur too, such as the use of Sophia in English culture, but it is particularly notable in Korea.

4Philippe Thiebault, “Exploring the Confucian Self: A Critique and Reinterpretation,” Transactions 73 (1998) 11-40, esp. 27. ‘Neo-Confucianism’ is called ‘Chu His Learning’ and was founded in the 12th c. in China. This is a developed form of Confucianism that originated with Confucius (Kong Fuzi, 552-479 BCE) in China (see Yves Raguin, “Confucianism,” in Cheu Hock-Tong [ed.], Confucianism in Chinese Culture [Selangor Darul Ehsan: Pelanduk, 2000], 1).

5For more details on T’oegye’s wisdom see Appendix 2 and further below.

6On the date it first entered Korea there is no unanimous agreement in Korean Confucian scholarship (see Haechang Choung, et. al, Confucian Philosophy in Korea [Seongnam-si: the Academy of Korean Studies, 1996], esp. 1-25). The possible date is given as between 4 BCE and 1 CE (Ey-Dong Hwang, Hanguk U-Hak SaSang [Korean Confucianism] [Seoul: Seo-Kang Sa, 1995], 14). But it is clear that Confucianism was first introduced into the Korean peninsula before the three kingdoms were established (Koguryo, Paekche, and Silla). In the fourth century Confucianism began to influence the patterns of political and social order in the kingdoms. For instance, in 372 a Confucian educational academy reportedly was established in the kingdom of Koguryo and then in Paekche and Silla (Andrew C. Nahm, A Panorama of 5000 Years: Korean History [New Jersey: Hollym International, 1988], 21;
in some way. Thus it is said that “Korean culture has grown and flourished as a Confucian one,” and that after the fifteenth century, the mainstream of Korean culture was “rooted in the soil of Confucianism, and moreover, contemporary Korean society remains within the boundary of Confucian influence.”

Confucianism has several distinctive characteristics that have made a strong impact upon Korean mentality and social behaviour. It first plays the most influential role in composing ethical and moral standards for Koreans. Regardless of religion, all Koreans have grown up and lived within the influence of Confucian moral and ethical teachings, since Confucianism serves to “uphold the moral character of the individual” and “promote moral order in society.” This is well expressed in the Five Principles (or Morals) of the Great Declaration of Ethics (oh reum). The teachings of the Five Principles, to a certain extent, accord with the “household codes” in the New Testament (e.g. Col. 3:18-4:1; Eph. 5:21-6:9). On this basis, it is clear that there is a


Jang-Tae Keum, Confucianism and Korean Thoughts, Korean Studies Series 10 [Seoul: Jimoondang, 2000], iii, 49-51. By the time the Choson dynasty (1393-1910) was established, Neo-Confucianism was treated as “the official ideology of the new state because a number of Confucians played a leading role in founding the dynasty. Later on, Confucianism began to take a more influential position in the whole area of human life in the Korean peninsula” (Keum, Confucianism, 37-49). In spite of this, it is true that Shamanism, Buddhism, Taoism, Tonghak (‘Eastern Learning’) or Ch’ondogyo, and other indigenous traditions as well as Confucianism all are part of Korean culture (see Chongho Kim, Korean Shamanism: the Cultural Paradox [Aldershot: Burlington: Ashgate, 2003], xiv, 26-7, 66, 98-9, 149, 189-91; Sang Taek Lee, Religion and Social Formation in Korea: Minjung and Millenarianism [Berlin; New York: Mouton de Gruyer, 1996], 97-101, 106, 115). So they all should be considered important in providing Korean cultural identity. But I would argue that Confucianism has influenced the whole area of Korean life in general more than the others, and that it is the major shaper of Korean cultural identity.

Keum, Confucianism, 33.

The first principle is bu ja yu chin meaning that there is love between parents and children, which mostly emphasises filial piety. The second one is gun sin yu ui meaning that there is a right relationship between an emperor and his people, which emphasises social justice. The third one is bu bu yu buyl meaning that there is mutuality between a husband and a wife, which emphasises role and duty in a family. The fourth one is jang yu yu suh meaning that there is order between elderly people and young people, which emphasises respect towards elderly people. The last one is bung u yu shin meaning that there is trust between friends, which emphasises reliance in social relationships (Jung, Ukyoyihae, 214-5).

similarity between the teachings of Christianity and those of Confucianism when it comes to basic moral and ethical issues. Although the household codes appear in the deuter-Pauline literature, there are also connections with the Hellenistic vice and virtue lists which appear in the earlier Pauline epistles (e.g. Gal. 5:19-25).

Confucianism also has a strong impact on the philosophical perceptions of humanity (in sung) and wisdom (sulgiljeehye) in Korean society. In Korean Confucian thought and especially T’oegye’s philosophical ideas, it is believed that all humans are innately good because they trust in a god as the ultimate being who resides in human nature and who is very close to human beings.11 Yi I (Yulgok; 1536-1584), a Confucian thinker, states, “people have an original good nature, in which there are no distinctions of past and present, wisdom and foolishness.”12 Similarly, T’oegye referred to wisdom as a part of human nature, or Four Beginnings comprising benevolence, righteousness, propriety, and wisdom. He understood human nature as perfectly good, certainly analogous to Mencius’ (Mengzi, 371-289 BCE) argument about “the ultimate justification” of human nature.13 According to T’oegye it is said that the Four Beginnings are endowed by Heaven (T’ien, Nature) and regarded as “innate, moral characteristics” of the fundamentally perfect goodness of human nature or as “the four roots of moral goodness inherent in human nature.”14 In other words,
T’oegye thought that wisdom (jeehyelsulgi), as part of the Four Beginnings, is imparted by Heaven (or Nature). Furthermore, T’oegye emphasised a close relationship between wisdom and becoming a sage. Wisdom is the most necessary element for a person to become a sage (hyun in; sung in goon ja). In T’oegye’s mind, it was his ultimate purpose of study (or learning) that he would obtain wisdom and become a sage, just like Confucius (Kong Fuzi) and Mencius (Mengzi). Hence it is clear that T’oegye gave a high value to the wisdom required for becoming a sage.\(^{15}\)

Nonetheless, T’oegye’s perceptions of wisdom also contrast with some biblical understandings of wisdom. Paul says in Romans 3:9b-11a, “...all people...are controlled by sin...There is no one righteous, not even one. No one understands.”\(^{16}\) This understanding appears to challenge T’oegye’s assertion that a human being has an intrinsically good nature, although this comparison seems forced because these two figures didn’t come out of the same context of faith and philosophy. Paul refers to the issue of sin in Romans 3:9b-11a in terms of his Christian belief, while T’oegye insists on the innately good nature of human beings in terms of his philosophical understanding of human beings and their moral (or ethical) tendencies.

On the other hand, Paul states in 1 Corinthians that, “Jesus Christ (is) the wisdom of God” (1:24), “…He (Jesus Christ) has become wisdom for us from God” (1:30), and “…your (Corinthians’) trust should not rest on human wisdom but on God’s power (Jesus Christ)” (2:5). These words are alike in some way to T’oegye’s

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\(^{15}\)Nam-Kook Cho (trans), *Sungak sipdo* (the Ten Diagrams of the Learning of the Sages) (Seoul: Kyoyoukkwahak’sa, 1986), 20-42.

\(^{16}\)In the wider biblical text of 3:9-11a in Romans Paul talks about the advantage of the Jews, for example, they are “entrusted with the oracles of God” (v. 2b). He acknowledges that the advantage which the Jews have is “great and important in every respect,” but at the same time he reminds all that “there is at least one respect in which (they have) no advantage – (they are) no less sinful before God” (C.E.B. Cranfield, *Romans: a Short Commentary* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985], 65). In Rom 3:9b-11a, however, Paul affirms that the Jewish advantage doesn’t grant the Jews any soteriological benefit in that all people, whether Jews or Gentiles, are alike under the power of sin...None is righteous” (vv. 9b-10a).
contention that wisdom comes from Heaven (or Nature) and a person becomes a sage by obtaining wisdom.

A further strong influence of Confucianism is found in Korean educational systems. In Korean society these three – the possession of wisdom, high education, and high social standing – are considered synonymous. This is due to the substantial impact of the Korean Confucian point of view regarding education, and the high value given to wisdom. Confucianism has fundamentally influenced both school and home education. In school education, Confucian ideas make a decisive impact upon its aims, its method, and its curriculum. Based on such a Confucian conception, Koreans cultivate their character and personality through education.\textsuperscript{17}

It may be argued, however, that Confucianism has also negatively affected Korean education in that it places undue emphasis on the reputation of a person, their family, and their social achievements. This means it is tempting for Koreans to praise and welcome only the wise and educated people – the elite. It is considered natural in Korean society that the uneducated and the powerless are isolated from society and the educated, wise, and ruling elites take the powerful and authoritative positions.\textsuperscript{18}

Lastly, a Korean-Confucian understanding of social stratification affects social hierarchies in Korean society, in which there were four distinctive social classes established, especially in the Choson dynasty.\textsuperscript{19} These are as follows: the higher classes of yangban (and sonbi), the middle (jungyin), and the lower (sangmin which literally means ‘commoners’) and chonmin (‘lowest class’).\textsuperscript{20} Both yangban and sonbi

\textsuperscript{17}Keum, Confucianism, 33.
\textsuperscript{18}Hun-Goo Lee, Hanguk Jeuntong Jongkyo hanguk kyohoi (Korean Traditional Religions and Korean Church) (Seoul: Gloria, 1995), 175.
\textsuperscript{19}This Choson dynasty was the last kingdom in Korean history. Then, Confucian philosophy and customs were widespread all over the Korean peninsula. Confucianism thus was highly valued in the civic life of Koreans. This Choson dynasty was ended by the invasion by Japan in 1910 (for details see Young-Gyu Park, Choson Wangjo Shillok [Veritable Records of the Choson Dynasty] [Seoul: Deulneuk, 1996]).
\textsuperscript{20}Chewon Kim and Won-Yong Kim, The Arts of Korea: Ceramics, Sculpture, Gold, Bronze, and
referred to those who were well-educated and elite people. They were the highest social class. The Korean word *yangban* means literally ‘two divisions’. It describes “Korea’s elite and aristocratic class” and “the two types of government officials, the civil and the military.”21 This *yangban* class not only took all the high ranking government positions, but they also owned “all land other than that owned by the royal family, the government and the Buddhist temples.”22 The *sonbi* refers to a learned Confucian scholar who did not desire a government post. He instead had more interest in self-improvement and knowledge and in teaching Confucian philosophy and ideology. He might not be wealthy but still belonged to the elite and high social class, as the *yangban* did, because of his knowledge of Confucianism.23

The middle class *jungyin* were skilled people such as physicians, accountants, meteorological observers, court painters, interpreters, secretaries and people who were involved in trading and who were often wealthy. They were not, however, legally allowed to elevate their social status through their wealth, unlike these wealthy Corinthians who could rise in status through their money because of patronage systems.24 At the lowest level in Korean society were the *sangmin* and *chonmin*.

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22Kim, *Arts of Korea*, 23.  
23National Museum of Korea, *A World of the Neo-Confucianism in Choson Dynasty* (Seoul: National Museum of Korea, 2003), 10. In addition, it is said that there was a slight difference between *yangban* and *sonbi*. All *sonbi* should become *yangban*, while all *yangban* did not belong to the group of *sonbi*. T’oege was a *sonbi*, not just a *yangban*, because he dedicated his life to studying how to improve Korean society by Confucian philosophy and to practise Confucian thoughts as a political ideology (for more details on T’oege see Appendix 2).  
24For details on patronage see 2.2.1 above.
Farmers and craftsmen belonged to the *sangmin*, while slaves and actors to the *chonmin*. The both were alike uneducated and usually poor.\(^{25}\)

In Korean society today there is still a widespread Confucian tendency. This is called *sonbi sasang* or *sonbi* syndrome or *sonbi-*ism.\(^{26}\) This *sonbi sasang* emerges from the Confucian over-emphasis on educated and elite people such as the *yangban* and *sonbi*.\(^{27}\) It has been part of the Korean mentality for hundreds years since the *Choson* dynasty. In the 21\(^{st}\) century, *sonbi sasang* is attested in both tendencies. Koreans give high respect to scholars (*hak ja*), university and college professors (*gio su*), and people of higher education (*koh deung gio yook ja*) and of knowledge (*jee shik yin*). They also highly value wisdom (*jee hye/sulgi*), and regard the educated as people of wisdom and as having leadership capacities in politics.\(^{28}\)

Consequently, in Korean Confucian society the uneducated and ignorant (people of *sangmin* and *chonmin* origins) tend to be ignored and despised and also isolated and marginalised from the mainstream of society. In this regard there are similarities between the behaviour of some of the Corinthian Christians who were influenced by the social and cultural systems of first century Roman Corinth, such as rhetorical conventions and patronal networks, and that of some Koreans who are affected by Confucian teachings. They both appear to over-emphasise education (*gio yook*), knowledge (*jee shik*), and social standing.

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\(^{25}\)Kim, *Arts of Korea*, 23.

\(^{26}\)The Korean word *sasang* means ‘thought’.

\(^{27}\)In Korean-Confucian society, rather than the *yangban*, the *sonbi* are most respected because of their commitment to study and education. That is why this feature is called *sonbi sasang* rather than *yangban sasan*.

\(^{28}\)Two occurrences support this argument: one is that several candidates for the next election for the Korean presidency (that is scheduled in December 2007) are former university professors and graduates from the Seoul National University, the top university in Korea (e.g. Dong-Young Jung, Hak-Gyu Son, Heh-Chan Yi, Guk-Hyun Moon, and Myong-Pak Yi). The other is that in Korea there has been most recently created a new phrase, *shin jee shik yin* that means literally ‘people of new knowledge’. This phrase is used particularly to praise and honour Koreans who invent and pioneer something new in relation to Information Technology. This phrase is closely related to the rapid development of the Information Technology industry in Korea in the 21\(^{st}\) century.
Moreover, the *sonbi* syndrome to some extent affects Protestant Korean churches where it causes a problem of discrimination. Some members of higher education, wealth, and high social positions take leadership positions in Korean Christian communities, whereas others who are uneducated and poor are excluded from those leadership positions. This is similar to the Corinthian Christian Community in Paul’s day. Some Corinthian Christians of wealth and higher social status seem to have despised their fellow Christians of lower classes (e.g. 1 Cor 11:22).

In Korean Protestantism there are traditionally three different offices: pastor or minister (*moksa*), elder (*jangro* for man; *kwonsa* for woman) and deacon(ess) (*jipsa*).29 Some Korean Christians often understand these offices in the light of social and hierarchical structures and view the elder (*jangro*) as having a higher position than the deacon (*jipsa*) in the church.30 They also relate the office of elder to a high position in wider civic society.31 In Korean-Confucian Christian society, the office of elder doesn’t only indicate a leadership position in the church, but also refers to wealth and high social status.32 It often happens that in order to become an elder a

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29Cf. in 1 Timothy 3:1-13 where there are two offices described: *episkopos* (v.1; cf. Titus 1:7) and *diakonos* (v.8).
30The office of deacon is not closely related to social status in the Korean-Confucian Christian context. In becoming a deacon(ess) there is not much difference between a Christian who possesses wealth and high social status and another who is poor and uneducated.
32Women are not entitled to be elders (*jangro*) but *kwonsa* in Protestant Korean churches. This *kwonsa* doesn’t technically refer to a leadership position in the church but rather to a helping and assistant role. In this respect there is not much difference between *kwonsa* and female *jipsa* (deaconess). They do not have an upfront role in leadership and the decision-making process. Their duty and responsibility is to help and support pastors and (male) elders to do ministry and conduct services and company them while visiting homes and hospitals. It is also their responsibility to prepare meals for the whole congregation and oversee food distribution on Sundays. Most Korean churches, whether in Korea or overseas, have a lunch meal together after the morning service, as a Christian tradition (11 or 11:30 am). Nonetheless, I notice that a Korean Uniting church in Sydney has named 2 *kwonsas* as elders. This church has made a revolutionary step in terms of the tradition of the Korean church, which has tended not to have female elders in its leadership office (see http://au.christiantoday.co.kr/view.htm?id=18175, accessed on 1/06/08).
person needs to be well educated, wealthy, or have a high social position in the wider civic society. He has to be wealthy enough to contribute a large amount of money to the church he is ordained with. In spite of this, he would willingly become an elder because the office of elder helps him rise in status and obtain honour and a better reputation in the wider society. This Korean Christian (Protestant) situation is similar to the behaviour of some of the Christians who possessed wealth and high social status at Roman Corinth. They suggested that Paul should accept patron-client relations and accept financial gifts. They, thereby, wished to take leadership roles and put the Christian community under their control (2 Cor 11:7-11).

On the other hand, the Corinthian Christians who were poor and belonged to the lower classes were humiliated and discriminated against in the Christian community. They were of course excluded from leadership positions and the Lord’s Supper (1 Cor 11:22). Similarly, in Protestant Korean churches some Christians who are poor and uneducated are excluded from leadership positions, such as the eldership and isolated from the decision-making group in the church. This reflects the Confucian over-emphasis on wisdom (jeehye/sulgi), education (gio yook), and knowledge (jee shik). It also reflects the undue Confucian emphasis on the fame and reputation of a person, their family and their social achievements, and the sonbi syndrome prevailing in the wider Korean Confucian society.

Nevertheless, Paul’s message in 1 Corinthians challenges such assumptions and social-conventions-oriented conduct. Paul argues that no one should boast about

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34 We here have to remind ourselves that Jesus welcomed the poor and the marginalised (e.g. Luke 4:18). We should also be aware of James’ warning about partiality in the Christian communities (James 2:1-9).
his/her social privilege – wisdom, high education, wealth, power, and high social status – in a Christian community (1:26), since no one can find any favour in the eyes of God by expressing such social privilege. This serves to remind Korean Christians 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). Paul also emphasises that each Christian has his/her gift(s) given from God and should use the gift in serving the body of Christ rather than his/her social privilege (12:1-19). All Christians, whether educated or uneducated, whether wealthy or poor, or whether of higher social status or lower standing, are equally called by God according to their spiritual gifts. They then serve the body of Christ as God’s fellow workers (1 Cor 3:5-9) to build up the community in love.

Furthermore, Paul’s challenge to the Corinthians reverberates through the ages for Korean Christians to boast about ‘Christ-crucified-originated’ wisdom (jeehye/sulgi) in Christian churches rather than ‘human thought-based’ and ‘cultural conventions-oriented’ wisdom. Or in other words, there is a challenge here for Korean Christians who have uncritically adopted ‘Korean Confucianism-oriented’ wisdom. Paul describes this ‘Christ-crucified-oriented’ wisdom 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 Christ from the dead as the wisdom of God, who had died on the cross (1 Cor 15:12-57). This should be regarded as the essence of the gospel message Korean Christians preach in the Christian churches (1 Cor 15:1-4) and as the ground for their boasting (9:15, 16). Preaching the gospel message of Jesus Christ as the wisdom of God, Paul also challenges Korean Christians to stop boasting of the Confucian understandings of wisdom and social achievement (1:29). Furthermore, Paul urges us to imitate the way he boasts
(kauchaomai) of the gospel of Christ crucified as the wisdom of God (1:30, 31; 3:18; 4:16). Christ Jesus has become “our wisdom, our righteousness and holiness and redemption” (1:30-31). We now turn to a further social manifestation of wisdom thought: an investigation of the imperial cult of first-century Roman Corinth from a Korean-Confucian Christian context.

4.2 Shinto Shrine Worship (sin sa cham bae)

The imperial cult, sometimes involving emperor worship, was active by the time Paul established the Christian ekklēsia at Roman Corinth. At the imperial cult the Corinthians worshipped and venerated not only deceased emperors but also the reigning one, and even living members of the imperial family. Some of the Corinthian Christians were apparently involved in this (1 Cor 8:1-6). These practices then caused problems in the Corinthian Christian community, especially as regards the issues of idol worship (or idolatry) (1 Cor 10:1-22) and food dedicated to idols (8:1-13) and the resulting affirmation of the inscribed patronal networks from the Emperor down. Keeping this in mind, I wish to explore Paul’s response to this imperial cult in the light of Japanese imperialism in Korea from 1910 to 1945 and Shinto Shrine worship (sin sa cham bae in Korean) where a Japanese emperor is worshipped. I will then go

35Paul doesn’t directly addresses the issue of imperial cults anywhere in 1 Corinthians, although he explicitly deals with that of ‘meat offered to idols’ in chapters 8 and 10. I would argue, however, that this issue is implied in both chapters (see Richard Horsley, “Rhetoric and Empire--and 1 Corinthians” in R. Horsley (ed.), Paul and Politics; Ekklesia, Israel, Imperium, Interpretation; Essay in honour of Krister Stendahl [Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 200], 72-102).

36I have argued that in 1 Corinthians Paul appears to tackle separately the issue of eating food dedicated to idols in the context of temples and involving imperial cults (8:1-10:22) and that of eating meat offered as a sacrifice in the context of domestic cults and especially ancestral rites (10:23-11:1) (see 3.2.1 above and 4.3 below; B.W. Winter demonstrates relationships between religious pluralism in Greco-Roman times and 1 Cor 8-10. This assists in attempting a dialogue between the imperial cult in the Roman Empire and Japanese imperialism in a Korean context [see Bruce W. Winter, “In Public and In Private: Early Christianity Interactions with Religious Pluralism” in Andrew D. Clarke & Bruce W. Winter [ed.] One God, One Lord in a World of Religious Pluralism (Cambridge: Tyndale House, 2002), 207-224].
on to re-read the issue of domestic (household) cults addressed in 1 Corinthians 10:23-11:1 in the light of ancestral rites (jesa or josang soongbae in Korean), that continue to be an integral part of Korean Confucian culture.\footnote{K.K. Yeo provides a cross-cultural reading to the issue of food offered to idols addressed in 1 Corinthians 8 and 10 from a Chinese-Confucian Christian perspective and particularly that of ancestral “worship”. This approach is analogous to what I attempt in this thesis. I agree with Yeo in arguing that Chinese people (and Koreans) perform ancestor veneration “as an act of filial piety” to their dead ancestors (see Yeo, \textit{Rhetorical Interpretation in 1 Corinthians 8 and 10}, 15-49, 212-22; also 4.3 below). Yet he does not separate 1 Cor 8:1-10:22 from 10:23-11:1, although Paul clearly addresses different issues in these two different contexts (see 3.2.1 above).}

In the early half of the 20th century Korea was colonised by Japan. On the 29th day of August in 1910 it was publicly announced all over the Korean peninsula that Korea had been annexed by Japan.\footnote{The Institute of Korean Church History Studies, \textit{Hangook Kidokyoeui Yeoksa I} (A History of Korean Church): vol. 1(16C-1918) (Seoul: the Christian Literature Press, 1989), 309.} Since then thousands of Korean Christians were involved in resistance and independence movements against Japan. The following two events are important to mention in this context: the ‘105 Men Incident’ or the ‘Christian Conspiracy Case’ in 1911,\footnote{In 1907 a political party called \textit{Shin Min Hoe} (the New People’s Party) was organised. Many Christian leaders were actively involved in the party, although it was secular. They were arrested on “charges of conspiracy for the assassination of Governor General Terauci in 1910. This incident was called ‘the 105 men Incident’” because 105 Christian leaders were imprisoned. Besides this, there were a large number of Christians including Protestants and Catholics involved in national independence movements, although Western missionaries opposed their involvement (John C. England, et al. (eds), \textit{Asian Christian Theologies: A Research Guide to Author, Movements, Sources}: vol. 3: Northeast Asia [Delhi: ISPCK; Quezon City: Claretian Publishers; Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2004], 502).} and ‘the March First (\textit{Samil} in Korean) Independence Movement’ in 1919.\footnote{On 1st March, 1919, the leaders of resistance movements against Japanese colonial rule, issued their declaration of independence which was read at a public park in Seoul, triggering nationwide demonstrations demanding national independence” (England, \textit{Asian Christian Theologies}, 505).} In these two independence movements Christians played a substantial role in leadership, and hundreds of Christians were then persecuted and executed by Japanese colonisers. In particular, the 105 Men Incident is seen as the Japanese colonisers’ most significant persecution of Christians.
in Korean church history. In the March First Independence Movement more than half of the leaders were Christians. There were 33 leaders out of which 17 were Christians. This independence movement incurred further persecution of many Christian leaders. It is claimed, however, that this movement has become “the outstanding example and symbol for nationalist aspiration and one of the sources for indigenous and Minjung theology.”

After the March First movement, the Japanese colonial government compelled Koreans to change their family names to a Japanese form and use Japanese language in all public schools and churches. Moreover, this colonial government forced all Koreans, and particularly Christians, to attend Shinto shrines and worship the Japanese emperor. It was in 1935 that Shinto shrine worship (sin sa cham bae) was thoroughly and compulsorily forced on all Christians. This even applied to Western missionaries in the Korean peninsula. Nonetheless, Korean Christian leaders and Western missionaries opposed strongly this Shinto shrine worship defining it “as interference with religious belief.”

At that time, the most outstanding resistance against Shinto shrine worship took place in Pyongyang (which is now the capital of North Korea), because the city had the largest Christian population. It was thus called the “Jerusalem of Korea.” In the city there were two American missionaries, G.S. McCune and V.L. Snook, who were both principals of Christian schools. The Japanese local government in Pyongyang forced them, as representatives of Christian schools, to pay respect to

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41 Institute of Korean Church, *Hangook Kidokyo*, 308.
Shinto shrines. The Japanese government threatened to close the schools and make them leave the Korean peninsula, unless they practised Shinto shrine worship (sin sa cham bae). Nevertheless, they refused to participate in the Shinto shrine worship according to their consciences, whereupon they were removed by force from their principalships and expelled to America. From then the Japanese colonial government more thoroughly compelled all Korean Christians to give respect to Shinto shrines.\(^{46}\)

Choo Ki Chul, senior pastor of the San Jung Hyun Presbyterian Church in Pyongyang, claimed that Shinto shrine worship was idol worship (or idolatry) according to the Ten Commandments, especially the first two (Exodus 20:1-6).\(^{47}\) He was then imprisoned for seven years and martyred in 1944 a year before Korean independence took place. Afterward, because of their refusal to participate in veneration of Shinto shrines, more than 2000 Christians all over the Korean peninsula were arrested. Of them 50 were executed in prison. About two hundred churches were also forced to close down by the Japanese authorities.\(^{48}\)

Meanwhile, some Korean Christians and some Western missionaries began to assert that Shinto shrine worship (sin sa cham bae) should be seen as a political act rather than a religious one. In other words, it could be seen to mean nothing other than an expression of patriotism, allegiance and loyalty to the state and the Japanese ruling emperor. They, accordingly, claimed that it shouldn’t be seen as a matter of idol worship from a Christian perspective, but merely as an observation of the law of the state. They further argued that even if paying respect to Shinto shrines might be idol worship from a Christian point of view, there was no point refusing Shinto shrine

\(^{46}\)Min, \textit{Hangook Kidokyohoisa}, 426.  
\(^{47}\)“You shall have no other god to set against me. You shall not make a carved image for yourself nor the likeness of any thing in the heaven above, or on the earth below, or the waters under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or worship them…” (vv. 3-5a).  
worship and risking many Christians being martyred and hundreds of churches shut
down.49

Consequently, there were diverse arguments about Shinto shrine worship
among Christians and their leaders. Some agreed to show veneration and homage to
Shinto shrines, whereas the others refused. Such actions caused divisions in the
Christian communities in Korea. For example,

In Busan the Christian churches disputed Shinto Shrine worship. People of the party of Rev
Kil Chang Kim argued for it, while the others opposed it…Rev Jae Hwa Choi who had been
involved in independence movements …He didn’t offer veneration to Shinto shrines…He
preserved his Christian faith.50

In sum, during the Japanese imperialist invasion of Korea, Shinto shrine
worship (sin sa cham bae) was used as a symbol of “Japanese imperial rule.”51 It
further became a critical factor in causing severe persecution and divisions in the
Christian churches all over the Korean peninsula. It is interesting to observe that with
regard to the issue of emperor worship there are similarities and analogies between
the Christian context of Roman Corinth in the first century and that of Korea in the
early 20th century. Just as there was social pressure for the Corinthian Christians in the
day of Paul to worship and venerate the Roman emperor and the imperial family
members due to the imperial cult and imperial patronage (1 Cor 8:1-13; 10:1-30), so
Korean Christians during Japanese imperialism were forced to worship the Japanese
emperor and pay respect to Shinto shrines (sin sa cham bae).

It is also true that in these two extremely different social contexts the worship
of emperors was alike seen as idol worship or idolatry from some Christian
viewpoints (1 Cor 8:5) but not from others. This is related to the Ten Commandments

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49Roman Catholics in Korea had taken a similar position, because in 1936 the pope allowed Korean
Catholics as well as Japanese to worship the emperor and give respect to Shinto shrines. He declared
that the Shinto shrine worship was nothing other than an expression of patriotism and loyalty to the
state and the Japanese emperor (Min, Hangook Kidokyohoisa, 427).

50Hyo-Saeng Park, BusanJin Church Centennial History 1891-1991 (Busan: BusanJin Church Press,
1991), 183. This is my own translation from the Korean script.

in Exodus 20:1-6 (1 Cor 10:1-22). In both contexts many of the Christians thus refused to worship emperors (1 Cor 10:14). The issue of emperor worship later turned to the problem of factionalism in both the Corinthian and Korean Christian communities (1 Cor 1:10; 8:7-13). In the Korean churches, as an act of respect for the state, some agreed to the demands of the Japanese emperor, while others refused because it was idolatry. Similarly, in the Corinthian Christian community some members accepted their act of worshipping the Roman emperor as part of the social system of the imperial cult and imperial patronage. They also accepted the eating of meat offered to idols with the slogan “all things are lawful” (1 Cor 10:23), and, “no idol is real” (1 Cor 8:4), whereas others rejected it (1 Cor 8:1-13).

In 1 Corinthians 8, however, Paul neither supports nor blames their behaviour directly, although he appears to have strongly commanded them not to be idolaters and stop idol worship in the temple in 1 Corinthians 10 (vv. 6, 14). In other words, he doesn’t speak of whether it is a sin against Christ for some of the Corinthian Christians implicitly to worship the Roman emperor and to eat food sacrificed to idols – which are only ‘so-called Gods’ (1 Cor 8:4-6). He rather suggests 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. Paul further 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 (schismata) (1:10; 11:18-19; 12:25).

In this respect I argue that Paul seemed more concerned about the problem of factions in the Corinthian congregation than the issues of emperor worship and food dedicated to idols themselves, although these issues apparently helped to cause the
factions amongst the Corinthians. He does strongly condemn the social consequences of idol worship in the temples – using the traditional Jewish understandings that idolatry leads to immorality (1 Cor 10:1-22) – but his overall focus is always on the implications for the ekklēsia. Thus 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 highly values love more 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.

This Pauline message should help contemporary Korean Christians to re-evaluate Shinto shrine worship during Japanese imperialism in the early 20th century. Many Korean Christians tend to criticise and blame some forefathers who participated in the veneration of Shinto shrines and view them as compromising their Christian faith with the world and committing idolatry against God. These Koreans further criticise the forefathers for betraying the Christian faith and saving their own lives. That is why many Koreans value highly those other forefathers who refused to pay respect to Shinto shrines and were persecuted for preserving their Christian faith. They should, however, consider the important Pauline message of unity and love in Christian communities before they judge whether the Shinto shrine worship their forefathers performed was idolatry. In 1 Corinthians 8-13 Paul clearly emphasises the unity of the body of Christ and the reconciliation of the saints, and takes a remarkably relaxed attitude to ‘indirect involvement’ in idol-meat through the meat markets and

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52Smith argues similarly Symposium to Eucharist, 211.
neighbourhood meals. These are not issues to be judgmental about or to split the church over (1 Cor 10:31-11:1).

4.3 Ancestor Veneration (jesa)\textsuperscript{53}

Surrounding the issue of emperor worship, there lies a deeper connection to domestic (household) cults and ancestral veneration, in both Corinth and Korea. The domestic cults were popular amongst Greeks and Romans in the first-century Greco-Roman world. According to Rives, “the main objects of (the) household cult were, on the one hand, the household gods, and, on the other, the family dead.”\textsuperscript{54} 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 a sacrifice on a regular basis.\textsuperscript{55} Rives states further:

Civic officials had an interest in upholding and even regulating the traditional (Greek and Roman) forms of domestic cult. A candidate for public office in Athens, for example was traditionally asked whether he had family tombs…In Rome Cicero regarded it as an essential part of an ideal city-state that heirs be required to maintain family cults (On Laws 2.48), and the pontifices, one of the chief groups of public priests, did exercise some authority in matters of household cult such as burial law and the inheritance of religious duties.\textsuperscript{56}

In Greco-Roman times all members in the household participated in the domestic cult. They got together on a daily basis and invoked their household ‘living

\textsuperscript{53}Korean Christians tend to use the words ancestor ‘worship’ in order to help English-speaking readers understand better the practice of Korean ancestral rites, but I prefer to use the phrase ancestor ‘veneration’ or ‘commemoration’ because it more accurately reflects the idea of ancestral rituals in a Korean-Confucian Christian context.

\textsuperscript{54}Rives, Religion in the Roman Empire, 117; see also Mikalson, Ancient Greek Religion, 133-37; E. Ferguson, Backgrounds of Early Christianity, 166-8. Jews in the first century CE also commemorated their ancestors in various ways. For example, Paul expressed great respect and reverence towards Abraham because of his faith in God (see Roman 4:1-25; Gal 3:6-9). Nevertheless, this Jewish veneration towards their ancestors was unlike the Greek and Roman domestic cult.

\textsuperscript{55}Rives, Religion in the Roman Empire, 119. The offering of a sacrifice was followed by a dinner party (See E. Ferguson, Backgrounds of Early Christianity, 168, 170, 176; also Mikalson, Ancient Greek Religion, 135).

\textsuperscript{56}Rives, Religion in the Roman Empire, 121.
spirit’ and dead ancestors (family members) to protect them. As they performed ancestral rites and venerated their deceased ancestors, they understood that they were closely connected with their deceased ancestors. In other words, this ancestor veneration functioned as uniting in fellowship the living and dead members of a family. The cult (veneration) of the deceased helped to “maintain the identity of the family over time.” This household cult and especially the veneration of the dead can be compared to ancestor veneration in a Korean Confucian context. As the domestic cult was a significant part of Greco-Roman culture, so ancestor veneration is an integral part of Korean Confucian society in our time.

Roman (and Greek) domestic worship is glimpsed in 1 Corinthians 10:23-11:1 where it appears that Corinthian Christians would have been invited by their unbelieving contemporaries to private dinner parties and feasts (1 Cor 10:27). The food (or meat) that they ate at the dinner may well have been offered as a sacrifice at a domestic cult (or ancestor veneration) before being served. In Greco-Roman times, when people had meals in their houses, they first dedicated a small portion of food (or meat) to domestic deities and deceased heroes and ancestors, and then began to eat. This was a domestic, religious, and dietary custom in the Greco-Roman world in the first century CE. There is no doubt, therefore, that this custom took place in Roman and Greek homes in first-century Corinth. This is affirmed in 1 Corinthians 10:28, where Paul confirms that a host may say, “this (meat) has been offered in sacrifice.”

Paul suggests that if they were invited to such a private dinner and were disposed to go, they should go and eat “whatever is set before (them) without raising any question on the ground of conscience” (v. 27). He further commands, “whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God” (v. 31). In 1

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57Rives, Religion in the Roman Empire, 118; see also Osiek and Balch, Families in New Testament World, 83; Mikalson, Ancient Greek Religion, 133-36.
58See E. Ferguson, Backgrounds of Early Christianity, 166-8.
Corinthians 10: 27-29 it is clear that Paul allowed them to go, when they were invited to such a private meal, because he agreed that the Corinthian Christians had a right or freedom (exousia) to do whatever they liked to do (“all things are lawful,” 1 Cor 10:23). Yet he imposed conditions upon it: Their behaviour should have to be “helpful” not for “their own good,” but for “the good of (their) neighbour(s)” and for advantage of many people (1 Cor 10:23, 24, 33). Their conduct should “build up” the ekklēsia of God and please all people in the Christian community (10:32). Their behaviour should “give no offence to” any brother and sister in the house of God (10:32). They should also do all things for the glory of God (doxa theou, 10:31). If they did not follow such conditions, they should not go to such a private feast and eat food offered as a sacrifice to idols (1 Cor 10: 28, 29). I would argue that Paul made these conditions with the Corinthians because he needed to take proper precautions to prevent their behaviour from wounding the conscience of weak Christians (10:29). Moreover, he wished their conduct not to cause the problem of tension and schisms in the Corinthian Christian gatherings (1 Cor 11:18-19).

I now turn to evaluate the issue of eating meat offered as a sacrifice at the domestic cult (or ancestor veneration) from a Korean-Confucian Christian context, particularly ancestor veneration or ancestral rites or ancestor rituals (jesa or josang soong bae in Korean). As I have argued, some of the Corinthian Christians eating food dedicated to idols caused the wounding of the consciences of weak Christians and the problem of tensions and divisions in the Corinthian Christian gatherings (1 Cor 8:1-13; 10:23-33; 11:17-22). Similarly, insofar as ancestor veneration is seen as

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59 As do Hays and Newton briefly (see Hays, 1 Corinthians, 143; Newton, Deity and Diet, 397), yet I will develop this in more detail than they do. For ancestral rituals in a Korean-Confucian Christian context see also Jung-Young Lee (ed.), Ancestor Worship and Christianity in Korea (Lewiston; NY: E. Mellen, 1998), and Jürgen Moltmann, “Ancestor Respect and the Hope of Resurrection,” Sino-Christian Studies: An International Journal of Bible, Theology & Philosophy 1 (2006) 13-26, esp. 16 n. 2.
‘idol worship’ in Korean Christian homes there are still tensions between those who
perform ancestor veneration and others who don’t; those who are ‘passive
participants’ and those who will have nothing to do with it.

Ancestor veneration has been part of the life of Korean Confucian society for
a long time. It is an essential and integral part of Korean Confucian life and culture.60
T’oegye put a strong emphasis on ancestral veneration in Korean Confucian society
and thoroughly committed himself to practising it. He also argued that Koreans
should serve deceased ancestors in the same way they serve living elders. So it is
important in Korean culture to have an attitude of faithfulness, veneration, and
reverence towards deceased ancestors in the rite of ancestor veneration.61

Martina Deuchler states that in Confucianism, ancestor veneration is seen as
“the most filial act a son could perform for his parents,” but notes that daughters can
not join this ritual.62 If a son fails to perform ancestral rites this is “taken as evidence
of insufficient filial piety,” and he is punished by custom. For instance, “his living
elders disqualify him from conducting services for them after they die,” and he can be
“excluded from a place in the ancestral shrine, because an unfilial son cannot eat
sacrificial food with his father.”63 This son is also blamed as bae eun mang duk han
jasik (which literally means a son who loses gratitude from his parents) by his
relatives and neighbours. Many Koreans also believe that through this ritual activity
they not only express respect and veneration towards their deceased parents and
ancestors but also strengthen bonds with their relatives who participate in it. This is

60Keum, Confucianism, 33.
61See Jong-Sun Yoon, “T’oegye eseo jongyojek kyonghyang” (T’oegye’s Religious Tendency) T’oegye
hakbo 72 (1991) 7-17, esp. 11.
62Deuchler, Confucian Transformation, 176. An exception now is that a daughter who is the only child
in her family is allowed to participate in the ritual.
63Deuchler, Confucian Transformation, 176.
because ancestral rituals take place from time to time in the context of family reunions.⁶⁴

Nevertheless, in Christian circles, ancestor veneration has been contentious for centuries since Christianity was first introduced to Korea in the late 18th century for Catholics (1784) and the late 19th century for Protestants (1884).⁶⁵ Most Korean Protestants regard ancestor veneration as (heretical) idolatry due to the following superstitious characteristics of ancestor veneration.⁶⁶ In the rite of ancestor veneration (jo sang soong bae), Koreans “offer something in return for the benefits received from (a deceased ancestor) and keep (his/her) memories alive.”⁶⁷ Thus, they prepare the particular food as a sacrifice that their deceased ancestor loved to eat while alive, and prostrate themselves before the photo of a dead ancestor or the tablet which bears the name of a deceased person. Moreover, some Koreans believe that during the ancestral ritual the spirit of a dead ancestor visits the ritual site and eats the sacrificial food. In return, the spirit then blesses and guides the living descendents, and protects their household from evil and misfortune.⁶⁸

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⁶⁴Deuchler, Confucian Transformation, 176. Koreans perform ancestral rituals on special occasions such as the days the deceased ancestors died, New Year’s Day (January 1st), and Full Moon Day (August 15th) in the Korean lunar calendar.


⁶⁶In Korean Protestantism, the main churches belonging to the ‘evangelical’ circle are Baptist, Evangelical holiness church, Presbyterian, Methodist, Church of Christ, Assembly of God, and the Salvation Army.

⁶⁷Chai-Sik Chung, Korea: the Encounter between the Gospel and Neo-Confucian Culture (Gospel and Cultures Pamphlet 16; Geneva: WCC Publications, 1997), 17.

⁶⁸Chung, Korea: Encounter, 17. In the service of ancestral veneration, the first son of a dead ancestor holds a cup of Korean traditional rice wine with both hands and moves it around over the table on which incense burns. He repeats this a few times. This is an act of opening the ritual and inviting the spirit of the deceased to the ritual site. The rest of the male participants then make a deep bow before the photo of the deceased ancestor. They kneel, and place one hand by the other and then put them together on the floor, and bow the head deeply down on top of the hands. They repeat this deep bow twice. The photo is placed at the center of back row on the table on which food is arranged in rows and a brazen bowl full of white rice is placed, in the middle of which a brazen spoon is turned upward. This means to invite the spirit to the meal table, use the spoon, and eat the food. Afterwards, the food is served to all participants to eat. At this meal, they strengthen bonds with one another. Sons and daughters are all welcome to the meal.
Notwithstanding, I argue that such superstitious characteristics are not the pure form of Korean-Confucian ancestor veneration, but they are mixed with superstitious ingredients of indigenous folk cults, such as shamanistic cults, in Korea.69 These superstitious elements in ancestral veneration need careful analysis before being accepted by Christians. For example, when participants describe the food prepared for ancestor veneration as a sacrifice offered to a dead ancestor, and they believe the spirit of the deceased protects their household from evil and misfortune, it is clear that something more than respect for ancestors is the motivating force. These elements appear to contradict Paul’s argument that all things, including protection from evil, come from God the Father (1 Cor 8:6), and his command that the Corinthian Christians not offer sacrifices to a daimonion, but to God (1 Cor 10:20). The primary and major purpose of traditional ancestor veneration is to express filial piety to dead ancestors and to honour their memory; a practice Paul does not even draw attention to, though it was certainly present in all the homes of non-believers. In this process,

69In other branches of Korean society, there is a different form of ancestral veneration where some Koreans make a connection with their deceased ancestors, which is called a ‘shamanic ritual’ (gut in Korean). A shaman (mudang in Korean) conducts this shamanic cult, just like a Protestant pastor or Catholic priest at the Christian worship service. The mudang plays a mediating role in helping people communicate with their deceased ancestors who emerge as spirits. As Kim describes, at this shamanic ritual “many offerings such as food, wine, fruits and clothes, (are) arranged to please the spirits (of ancestors), and the shaman dance(s) and sing(s). (The ritual is) held at night because spirits were not very active during the daytime” (Kim, Korean Shamanism, 37-38). The shamanic ritual (gut) includes practices of healing and exorcism to expel evil spirits, similar to those described in the Gospels (e.g. Matt 8:1-17, 29-34; 9:8; Jn 4:43-54; 5:1-9) (Kim, Korean Shamanism, 38).

This shamanistic ritual is primarily conducted to worship and appease ancestral spirits. These spirits are believed to have supernatural power to heal the sick and provide happiness, prosperity, fortune, protection from evil, and so on. The shamanistic rite is mostly practised by those (uneducated) Koreans who live in rural areas today (see Bong Rin Ro, “Communicating the Biblical Concept of God to Koreans” in Aída Besançon Spencer and William David Spencer (eds), The Global God: Multicultural Evangelical Views of God [Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998], 207-30, esp. 216-17). However, shamanism is “not recognised officially as a religion...(although it is) the oldest religion...(and) remains the most prevalent form of religiosity in Korea...(This is because) in (post) modern Korea, numerous challenges toward shamanism have all become serious threats to its continued existence...Most educated Koreans are embarrassed if shamanism becomes a topic of conversation. They are quick to deny that shamanism has had anything to do with decent folk, and even quicker to terminate the discussion by proclaiming that it is no longer a part of Korean life” (Tae-Ju Moon, “The Korean American Dream and the Blessings of Hananim [God]” in Aída Besançon Spencer and William David Spencer [eds], The Global God: Multicultural Evangelical Views of God [Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998], 231-47, esp. 238-40). Thus, most Koreans, whether Christians or not, devalue Korean shamanism as animism and superstition rather than value it as an integral part of Korean traditional religious practices.
Korean Protestants can come to see ancestor veneration as an integral part of Korean traditional customs rather than as idolatry. These Korean Protestants should also consider that such ancestral veneration is not equated with the Christian understanding of the worship service (yeh bae in Korean) in which Christians give their exclusive devotion to God. Rather, the ancestor ritual comprises the conception of reverence and veneration towards deceased ancestors – an affirmation of the whole household of God.

Nevertheless, in Protestant Korean churches, it is believed that when in the service of ancestral ritual people bow down a few times before the pictures or statues of their deceased ancestors, it is definitely idolatrous worship that is taking place. Most Korean Protestants understand that from a biblical perspective, this is clearly seen as idol worship, because Exodus 20:4-5 says, “You shall not make for yourself an idol (pesel) in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them…” (NIV).

I argue, however, that this understanding is taken out of its biblical context. In the context of Exodus 20:4-5, the Hebrew word pesel means an “idol of stone, clay, wood, and metal” (cf. 2 K 21:7). The word pesel appears to be closely related to the Hebrew words elohei kesef (‘gods of silver’) and elohei zahab (‘gods of gold’) further in verse 23 within the same chapter. Hence, it can be argued that the Hebrew word pesel (‘idol’) in Exodus 20:4-5 refers to a statue or idol made of silver (kesef) and gold (zahab), which the Israelites substituted for the God who brought them up out of

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70Similarly, L.K. Lo argues in a Chinese Confucian context that “the mixed superstitious element in the present ancestral veneration (has to be) criticised, but the original meaning of filial piety (should be) confirmed” (Lung-Kwong Lo, “Paul’s gospel to the Gentiles and its Implications for Christian Mission to Chinese” in Michael Parsons [ed.] Text and Task: Scripture and Mission [Carlisle: Paternoster, 2005], 121-139, esp. 133: for details on filial piety in ancestral veneration see Yao, Introduction to Confucianism, 199-204.

71This is based on my experience. Most of the Korean pastors and laypeople I have seen in Protestant Korean churches agree with this argument, including myself until I discovered a new understanding of ancestor veneration in 1 Cor 10:23-11:1 (see below).

Egypt, and then worshipped as their god. Exodus 32:1-8 makes clear their idolatrous
behaviour. Verse 8 reads, “They…made themselves an idol cast in the shape of a calf.
They bowed down to it and sacrificed to it.” This is clearly idolatry and contravenes
the commandment, “You shall not bow down to and worship (anything like) a carved
image in the heavens above, or on the earth below, or in the waters under the earth”
(Ex. 20:5; NEB).

Yet it can be argued that this Scripture does not address the issue of ancestral
veneration as such. The word pesel (‘idol’) in Exodus 20:4-5 does not mean to include
their deceased ancestors – Abraham and Jacob – as those whom the Israelites
worshiped as idols. Moreover, the broader context of Exodus 20:1-23 does not
indicate that ancestor veneration is idolatry, such that believers should ban themselves
from practising it in their homes. Furthermore, Paul does not refer to Exodus 20:4-5
and challenge the Corinthian Christians to stop ancestral rites in homes in 1
Corinthians 10:23-11:1, where he disregards the issue of domestic ancestor
veneration. On the contrary, Paul reminds the Corinthian audience of the idolatrous
conduct of the Israelites in the wilderness (e.g. Ex. chs. 13, 14, 16, 17, 32; Num. chs.
11, 14, 16, 20, 21, 25) within 1 Corinthians 10:1-10 as part of the wider context of
8:1-10:22. Therein he deals with the problem of some of the Corinthian Christians’
idol worship in the context of temples and imperial cults. Paul further takes a direct
quotation from Exodus 32:6 (see above) in 1 Corinthians 10:7 and warns against their
improper behaviour. He then commands them, “Do not be idolaters as some of them
(the Israelites) were; as it is written, “the people sat down to eat and drink and rose up
to dance” (1 Cor 10:7), and “shun the worship of idols” (10:14). In this way, Paul has
distinctively different arguments between the issue of idol worship in temples and
imperial cults, and the ancestor veneration occurring in domestic contexts.\textsuperscript{73}

Early Korean Catholics, and especially the Franciscans, also strictly prohibited converts from practising ancestor veneration, because they defined it as idol worship or idolatry.\textsuperscript{74} Rome confirmed this definition and stopped Korean Catholics practising it, although it was an integral part of Korean Confucian culture. As a result, in the 1800’s, particularly in 1801, 1839, and 1866-1871, many Korean Catholics were severely persecuted by the Confucian government called the Choson or Yi Dynasty. Catholicism was condemned as “a heterodoxy that rejected Confucian ethics, loyalty to the king and the state, and the virtue of filial piety.”\textsuperscript{75} Korean Catholic scholars thus describe the first 100 years of Korean Catholicism as “a history of bloody persecution.”\textsuperscript{76} It is interesting, nonetheless, that in recent times Korean Catholics are allowed to perform ancestral rites in their homes without affecting their Catholic faith any more. They no longer define these practices as idolatry.

For Korean Protestants, however, ancestor veneration (\textit{jo sang soong bae}) is still controversial. It is a critical factor in causing trouble and divisions in some Korean Christian families due to disagreement about it between some members who see ancestor veneration as idolatry, and others who regard it as an act of filial piety toward their deceased ancestors.\textsuperscript{77} The trouble becomes even worse in a home where a husband is non-Christian and the first son in his family and his wife is Christian. The wife attempts to prohibit the performing of ancestral rituals (jesa) in her home because she sees it as idolatry from her Christian point of view. On the other hand, her husband and son know that through this ritual activity they perform the most filial act

\textsuperscript{73}I will develop this issue in detail below.
\textsuperscript{75}England, \textit{Asian Christian Theologies}, 481, 483.
\textsuperscript{76}England, \textit{Asian Christian Theologies}, 481.
\textsuperscript{77}As noted, only sons are allowed to participate in ancestral rites, not daughters.
as a son for their deceased parents.\textsuperscript{78}

Some Protestant Christians feel distant and isolated from their non-Christian relatives and neighbours who perform ancestor rituals as evidence of their filial piety. Some Christians instead perform \textit{chu do yeh bae} (which means ‘memorial service’) that is a modified form of ancestral veneration (\textit{jesa}) undertaken in the light of Christian worship. Substituting ancestral veneration by \textit{chu do ye bae} these Christians “feel they can now legitimately fulfil the fifth commandment to honour father and mother” (e.g. Exodus 20:12).\textsuperscript{79} This is, however, seen as an insufficient filial act by their relatives who are non-Christians and prefer traditional forms of ancestor veneration (\textit{jesa}). Therefore, many Protestant Christians are caught in a dilemma between \textit{jesa} and \textit{chu do yeh bae}.

Furthermore, part of the ritual custom of ancestor veneration persists even in daily life, especially in “the daily etiquette of greeting and conversation.”\textsuperscript{80} For instance, in greeting custom, in order to show respect and veneration young people always bow once before elderly people on the street, at home, or in church.\textsuperscript{81} If not, they might be accused of being impolite or rude or uneducated. In conversation and discussion, especially in classes, students must not disagree with or criticise teachers at any time because of the idea that teachers are always respected by students and the

\textsuperscript{78}This is based on my experiences not only in my home but also in the churches I have ministered in for more than 10 years. Interestingly, Korean Christians who live as migrants in foreign countries such as Australia and America have the same problem, as regards ancestor rituals, as other Korean Christians who live in Korea. It is apparent that ancestor veneration is an essential element of Korean Confucian culture. This ancestor veneration has a great impact on the life of all Koreans including Christians wherever they live.

\textsuperscript{79}Newton, \textit{Deity and Diet}, 397. This \textit{chu do yeh bae} comprises prayers, hymns, Scripture readings, and a short sermon and benediction by a minister. It is then followed by a communal meal that strengthens bonds with family members and participants (see Newton, \textit{Deity and Diet}, 397; also Chung, \textit{Korea: Encounter}, 14).

\textsuperscript{80}Keum, \textit{Confucianism}, 34.

\textsuperscript{81}Young people make a low bow with the upper body. They may shake hands with the elderly only when the latter first asks them to do so.
latter always obey the former.\textsuperscript{82} This respect for ‘the living elders’ transmutes at their
death into great reverence for the ancestors in general.

Today some Protestants are still greatly troubled due to their refusal to perform
ancestor veneration (jesa). The refusal is viewed as evidence of insufficient filial piety
in Korean Confucian society, but most Korean Protestants see ancestor veneration as
idolatry because they consider it as an act of worship or a religious act towards
someone/thing else than the Christian God. This view has been deeply rooted in
(conservative) Korean Protestant tradition for decades. Moreover, (conservative)
Korean Protestants express a decisively negative attitude towards any type of ancestor
veneration. They don’t like even to give value to it as an integral part of Korean-
Confucian life, and they separate themselves from it completely. They do not allow
anyone to perform ancestral rites in their houses at all. They refuse to accept
invitations to participate in a ritual of ancestor veneration that their non-Christian
relatives host. They refuse to bow down twice before the photo of a deceased ancestor
or eat food prepared for the dead ancestor, even if they are unintentionally amongst
participants of the ritual.\textsuperscript{83}

In 1 Corinthians 10:23-11:1, however, Paul appears not to support so
obviously such (conservative) Korean-Protestant thoughts, and instead commands the

\textsuperscript{82} “Teachers commonly control their students with both legitimated authority and Confucian ethical
values that are somewhat analogous to those between parents and offspring. Students believe that they
are indebted to their teachers for the benefits bestowed just as daughters and sons are indebted to their
parents” (Jeong-Kyu Lee, “Confucian Thought Affecting Leadership and Organisational Culture of Korea
Higher Education,” \textit{Radical Pedagogy} 3 [2001] 1-11 [http://radicalpedagogy.icaap.org/content/issue3_3/5-lee.html, accessed on 24/06/03]).

\textsuperscript{83} This is my own experience with my family, relatives, Christian friends, and ministers in Korea. I
behaved exactly like them at my father’s funeral back in 1989. As the first son, I refused to bow down
before his tomb for my mother, as a devoted Christian, did not want me to do so. She was proud of me
going to a bible college and becoming a minister. So she believed it was her responsibility to protect
her son from committing idolatry and from bowing down before his dead father. My refusal, however,
embarrassed my relatives and the rest of the non-Christians at the funeral. They were all angry at my
behaviour and it did not make sense to them at all. I was \textit{bae eub mang duk han ja sik} (which literally
means a son who loses gratitude from his parents) from their traditional Confucian point of view, but I
was a devoted and faithful Christian son from my mother’s traditional (conservative) Korean-Protestant
point of view.
Corinthian believers to stop such a (religiously) exclusive attitude towards ancestral veneration. In 10:25-27 Paul seems to have given a challenge both to the ‘strong’ and ‘weak’ Corinthian Christians (cf. 4:10; 8:9-10; 9:22), as he did in 7:17-24.\textsuperscript{84} The former ate (or would eat) food offered as a sacrifice at a private dinner alongside, or following after, domestic cultic performance. The latter felt (or would feel) their conscience wounded by the ‘strong’ Christians’ behaviour.\textsuperscript{85} In 10:27 Paul appears to have challenged the ‘weak’ Christians to go to private dinner feasts and “eat whatever (was) set before them without raising any question on the ground of (their) conscience,” if they were invited by their unbelieving contemporaries and were disposed to go. In 10:28-29 he also seems to have commanded the ‘strong’ Christians, if necessary, not to eat food dedicated as a sacrifice at domestic cults and to consider the conscience of the ‘weak’ Christians if they raised a critical question about the food the ‘strong’ ate because their conscience was hurt by it (8:7-11). Yet it is not clear whether they would in fact raise the question or not – it remains a hypothetical possibility that Paul considers.

Nonetheless, it is worth noting that Paul does not blame either the behaviour of the ‘strong’ or that of the ‘weak’ at all in 1 Corinthians 10:25-11:1, even though he had expressed a decisively determined attitude towards the worship of idols earlier (“shun the worship of idols,” 1 Cor 10:14). He does not judge it as an act of idolatry that the ‘strong’ Christians went to private dinner parties and ate food offered as a sacrifice at the domestic cults (and most probably including the rite of ancestor

\textsuperscript{84}Cf. J.P. Heil states, “with strong emphasis on ‘all’ (\textit{pan}) Paul commands not just part of his audience – either the so called strong or weak – but everyone in his audience” (Heil, \textit{Rhetorical Role of Scripture}, 165). His argument is helpful for there may well have been some Corinthian Christians who were identified neither as the ‘strong’ nor the ‘weak’.

\textsuperscript{85}See Hays, \textit{First Corinthians}, 174. In the previous passages he blamed the ‘strong’ Christians’ unhelpful conduct and challenged them to stop it on behalf of the ‘weak’ ones (see 1:26-29; 4:8-13; 5:6-13; 6:12; 7:36; 8:1-6; 9:22; 10:14, 23).
veneration). Paul rather commands them to consider as primary the conscience of other fellow Christians and then decide whether or not to exercise their right (exousia) to eat food offered in sacrifice (10:28-29).

At this point, we have a crucial question unsolved: Why does Paul here challenge both the ‘strong’ and ‘weak’ Corinthian Christians? This is because the issue of eating food offered in sacrifice, to some extent, caused – or at least was a symptom of – the problem of divisions (schismata) amongst the members in the Corinthian Christian community (11:18-19). In 1 Corinthians 10:23-33, therefore, it is Paul’s major concern that every Corinthian Christian, whether ‘weak’ or ‘strong’, should use his/her right (or liberty, exousia) for building up the ekklēsia of God (vv. 23, 32), for “the good” and “advantage” of other fellow Christians, not for his/her own good and advantage (v. 24, 33), for the sake of the conscience of fellow brothers and sisters in Christ (vv. 28-29), for the glory of God (doxa theou, v. 32) and the sake of the gospel (cf. 9:23), and for salvation of other people (v. 33; 9:22). In other words, Paul insisted that all Corinthian Christians should use their exousia to build up unity in the Christian community rather than to allow judging to cause schismata in it. Furthermore, Paul encouraged every Corinthian Christian to imitate the way he behaved as a servant of Christ crucified (11:1): He made himself a slave to all in order

86 A. T. Cheung and J.P. Heil correctly argue that at dinner parties “in private homes…there is no necessary or presumptive connection between food and idolatry…This kind of meal is unlike…temple meals (in which eidōlothuta are most probably served)...Paul’s advice in this case...(is that they) simply eat; it is not necessary (for them) to know the nature of the food” (Cheung, Idol Food, 157; Heil, Rhetorical Role of Scripture, 167 n. 19).

87 In 1 Corinthians (8:1; 10:23; 14:3) the phrase ‘to build up’ is “paralleled to encouragement and consolation...Paul uses the language of (‘to build up’) in connection with everyday situations like the tensions between the strong and the weak, and the problem of food offered to idols (8:1-10:22) and (the issue of household cults [10:23-11:1])” (Stettler, “The ‘Command of the Lord’,” 45; words in parenthesis are mine).

“For Paul (the words ‘to build up’) should characterise...Christian behaviour in a general way: benefiting others (6:12; 10:23; 12:7; 14:6) and seeking the good of others (10:24)…(The phrase ‘to build up’) is further characterised by serving one another, carrying one another’s burdens and pleasing one another, not oneself. Finally, according to 1 Cor 8:1 (the phrase ‘to build up’) is synonymous to love (agapē): love builds up (similarly Eph 4:16). Therefore for Paul building one another up is synonymous with serving one another in love” (Stettler, “The ‘Command of the Lord’,” 45-6; words in parenthesis are mine).
to win more of slaves for Christ (9:19) and became ‘weak’ to the ‘weak’ in order to win the ‘weak’ (9:22).

This Pauline message provides a challenge to (conservative) Korean Protestants to re-evaluate ancestral veneration in their Korean Confucian context. (Conservative) Korean Protestants tend to judge ancestral veneration from the perspective of Korean-Protestant traditional interpretations of it and to reject it as idol worship. They see it as a religious act or an act of worship in which participants are believed to give exclusive devotion to the spirits of deceased ancestors. (Conservative) Korean Protestants tend not to consider it as an essential and integral part of Korean traditional customs and as akin to the daily etiquette of greeting and conversation in which younger people pay respect to older ones.\(^8^8\) Korean Protestants might be encouraged to regard ancestor veneration as a practice of commemorating the word and deed of their deceased ancestors and expressing veneration and respect towards them.\(^8^9\) In so doing, (conservative) Korean Protestants would be freed to explore another way to assimilate their Christian faith into their Korean-Confucian tradition and culture rather than separate the former from the latter. We do not have to think that they commit a sin of compromising their faith in God with paganism and heresy. Furthermore, we need to have a less judgmental attitude towards Korean Confucianism and ancestor veneration in order to build up Korean Confucian

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\(^8^8\)M. Brett correctly states, “wherever veneration of ancestors is constitutive of culture, the way in which these practices are absorbed into Christian faith will present complex theological issues…(But) they will need to be considered carefully within the affected communities, without one side claiming superiority over the other” (Mark Brett, “Ancestral Religion in Postcolonial Perspective,” paper presented at the International SBL Conference 2005, Singapore, forthcoming in Biblical Interpretation).

\(^8^9\)Lung-Kwong Lo argues a similar position in the Chinese Confucian context, since a similar controversy on ancestral veneration occurs in Chinese Christianity. Lo suggests that Chinese ancestral veneration has to be viewed from “the perspective of gospel and cultures” rather than “gospel and religions” (Lo, “Paul’s gospel and Christian Mission to Chinese,” 134, 136). Furthermore, K.K. Yeo defines the practice of ancestor veneration as an act of filial piety that the Chinese are culturally encouraged to perform towards their deceased ancestors, and states, “to advise the Chinese not to practise ancestor veneration…is implicitly advising them not to be Chinese, not to love their parents, not practise love, etc” (Yeo, “Rhetorical Hermeneutic of 1 Corinthians 8,” 309).
traditions and customs within our Christian faith, or the other way around. Yet this has to be done as long as it does not damage and distort the gospel message. Moreover, before we devalue ancestor veneration as idolatry and express an exclusive attitude towards it and to non-Christians performing it, we would do well to consider the important Pauline message of unity amongst members in the Christian family and communities. Thereby, Korean Christians may be encouraged to use our exousia to give no offence to anyone around us, but to build up Christian homes and communities, not to seek our own benefit, but that of others, and to further the transforming presence of Christ’s presence both within the ekklēsia and thereby, ultimately, in the wider community as well (1 Cor 10:24-33).  

4.4 Mono Ethnic Community (danil minjok)

The ethnic composition of the Christian ekklēsia at Roman Corinth has been necessarily examined from the perspective of diverse ethnic communities because the Corinthian congregation no doubt reflected the wider multicultural and multiethnic community. It consisted of people of different ethnic origins (1 Cor 1:11, 22, 23; 12:12; 16:12-19; cf. Acts 18:1-28; Rom 16 1-3, 23). This is simply a reflection of the ethnic and cultural makeup of the wider civic society at Roman Corinth in the first century. As we have seen, in the time of Paul at Corinth there was a diversity of 

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90 Even Western theologians are beginning to see the relevance of this argument to their culture. J. Moltmann encourages his Western readers to open their consciousness and acknowledge the presence of their deceased ancestors in their consciences and memories. He argues that the things that happen to a father or mother impacts the conscience and lives of his/her children, for example, “the sins of the fathers burden the conscience of their children. The blessings of the ancestors fulfill the lives of their offspring” (Moltmann, “Ancestor Respect,” 22-23). He further states, “in modern Western countries (people) need a new culture of memory in order no longer to live (their) days as individuals, but rather to look beyond those days” (Moltmann, “Ancestor Respect,” 21).
ethnic migrant communities including the Romans, Jews and Greeks who came from all over the Roman Empire.\textsuperscript{91}

In order to draw analogies with the ethnic composition of the Christian ekklēsia at Roman Corinth, I will firstly draw parallels with the cultural and ethnic makeup of Australia’s population in our time, and then with the Korean situation. A large number of ethnic immigrants have come to Australia from all over the world. They have lived together in Australia in an increasingly multicultural society.\textsuperscript{92}

Meanwhile, all of them have also continued in their own distinctive ethnic groups: an English community, an Italian, a Chinese, a Korean, an American, an Australian born, and so on, and have been bearing their own cultural backgrounds and practising their customs and celebrating their traditional festivals.\textsuperscript{93}

Furthermore, many Australian churches have a vision to become a multi-cultural communities, comprising a diversity of small ethnic groups. Each group intermingles with other ethnic groups in the wider church community, but the church highly values and encourages each member to practise their own customs and traditions and to observe their own cultural festivals.\textsuperscript{94}

\textsuperscript{91}See 2.2 above.
\textsuperscript{92}For example, in Melbourne and the State of Victoria people from over 140 nations live and a total of 151 languages are spoken (http://www.monash.edu/international/australia/, accessed on 1/02/06). In 1973 the term ‘multiculturalism’ was first introduced into Australia. In 1977 multiculturalism was recommended as a public policy describing Australia as a multicultural society (for a detailed explanation of Australia’s multicultural policy see http://www.immi.gov.au/facts/06evolution.htm, accessed on 1/02/06).
\textsuperscript{93}In his latest set of projections, based on migration trends of the past 10 years, Charles Price has estimated that in the year 2025, people of Anglo-Celtic background will make up 62 per cent, and people of other European origins 15 per cent of the total population; that is, a total of 77 per cent will be of European background. People of Asian background will make up 16 per cent of the total population. Among the Asians, the Chinese will be the largest ethnic group at 7 per cent. Four per cent of the population will be of Middle Eastern (including Lebanese, Turkish and Egyptian) origins and 2 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander background” (http://www.aph.gov.au/Library/Pubs/rn/1996-97/97rn19.htm, accessed on 1/02/06).
\textsuperscript{94}This is based on my own pastoral experience at Oakleigh Baptist church in Victoria, Australia. The church is a multi-cultural, multi-national, and multi-lingual community where people speak three different languages (English, Korean and French) in Sunday services. For this type of ministry I refer to D.A. Anderson, Multicultural Ministry: Finding your Church’s Unique Rhythm (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 137-160; Kathleen Garces-Foley, Crossing the Ethnic Divide: the Multiethnic Church on a Mission (NY: Oxford University Press, 2007), 79-102, 139-150.
Korea, however, differs from Roman Corinth and Australia in terms of its ethnic and cultural formation. Roman Corinth and Australia are alike multicultural and multiethnic societies, whereas Korea is a mono-cultural and mono-ethnic one. For 5000 years of history Korea has carefully kept its race, language and culture homogeneous, although it was invaded and occupied several times by the neighbouring countries China and Japan. Consequently, the Koreans are described as a uniquely homogeneous ethnic group with their own language, culture, and customs. They are “purely of one common blood origin.”

Many Koreans are proud of their racial purity and even claim it to be an integral part of their national identity. This is because of the strong influence of the spirit of danil minjok (which literally means one nation and also refers to a homogeneous race or a pureblooded nation) that originated from the myth of Dan goon, the founder of han minjok (the Korean nation). This spirit has passed on to Koreans from generation to generation for several thousands of years and has deeply penetrated into the Korean mentality. Thus it has played a vital and significant role in forming and shaping Korean culture, just as Confucianism has. It helped bring the Koreans together as one nation and promote a unity among them to resist Japanese imperialism in the early 20th century. Furthermore, the spirit of danil minjok helps both North and South Koreans find something culturally and historically common between them and makes it easier to dialogue for unification. Just as with

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96 In my previous thesis, Works of Law (Erga Nomou), I claimed Confucianism as a national identity marker for Koreans.

97 H. Choi, “Review of Gender, Ethnicity,” 1. For more details of Japanese imperialism see above.
Confucianism, so this spirit of *danil minjok* is an essential part of the national identity for both countries beyond the differences of political ideology.\(^9^8\)

On the other hand, the spirit of *danil minjok* has also had a critical and negative impact upon the Korean mentality in that some racism (*injong chabyl*) exists. Many Koreans over-emphasise the importance of their racial purity and the role of the spirit of *danil minjok* in shaping Korean national identity. This causes them to have exclusive attitudes towards people of different races and different skin colours. It can encourage Koreans to racist ideologies (*injong chabyl*) and to consider their own nation superior to others. This racist ideology is also manifested in the policy of the South Korean government. Its constitution prohibits Koreans from possessing dual citizenship. For example, a Korean who lives in a foreign country such as Australia and gains citizenship there is forced to surrender their Korean citizenship.

Many Koreans understand this racism in a way that is analogous to social class. They view themselves as ranking higher than other nations, who have different skin colours and mixed blood. In other words, they regard themselves as *yangban* (which refers to the highest class) and other nations as *sangmin* (which literally means common people) or *chonmin* (which literally means people of lowest class).\(^9^9\) This sort of racism lies at the bottom of Korean mentality because of the strong influence of the spirit of *danil minjok*. Similarly, commentators such as Michael Breen claim that Korean people are too “nationalistic and have a racist obsession with their blood.”\(^1^0^0\) It appears, therefore, that many foreigners who live in Korea feel discriminated and rejected by Koreans in general.\(^1^0^1\)


\(^9^9\)See above for more details of social class in Korea.

\(^1^0^0\)Breen, *The Koreans*, 28.

\(^1^0^1\)Breen, *The Koreans*, 28.
Further, many Koreans, whose mentality has been strongly influenced by the spirit of *danil minjok* and whose race is homogeneous, wouldn’t be able to empathise with those people who have mixed blood, mixed culture, and mixed ethnic origins. Because of these reasons, many Koreans would tend to avoid people of such mixed cultural backgrounds. Some of them have a very strong exclusive and even hostile attitude towards other Koreans who marry spouses of different ethnic origins. They consciously exclude such Koreans from the mainstream of Korean society.

Furthermore, the spirit of *danil minjok* causes, to some extent, diaspora Koreans, particularly those of the first migrant generation, to hesitate to make intimate relationships and intermingle with people of different ethnic and cultural origins in multicultural and multiethnic societies such as Australia and America. Of course it helps to bond the Koreans much more closely and encourage the formation of their own ethnic and cultural community where they might, without hindrance, practise their own customs and observe their traditional festivals within the wider multicultural society. Yet no doubt the spirit of *danil minjok* troubles some Koreans in the building up of close relationships and friendships and interweaving with people who come from different nations and different linguistic, cultural, and ethnic backgrounds. Most Koreans don’t have much contact with foreigners in Korea itself. They don’t usually speak any other foreign languages, but just their own mother tongue. This can cause them to continue to have reserved attitudes towards foreigners, even though they may have left their home country for years and have lived in a multicultural society.

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102 Mark Hutchinson notes, “Koreans are the forth most scattered nationality on the earth, after the Jews, the Chinese and the Italians” (Mark Hutchinson, “The Anatomy of Misunderstanding: Readings and Consequences for the Home Australian Korean Churches,” *Australasian Pentecostal Studies* 10 [2006/7], 49-72, esp. 57).
Moreover, the spirit of *danil minjok* leads diaspora Koreans to form their own exclusive ethnic communities that are isolated socially and culturally from other ethnic communities within the wider multicultural society and even from the host society. They have no close link with other ethnic communities. They rather tend to establish a small Korean community that has more intimate contacts with their home country than the country and society where they reside at the present time.\(^{103}\)

Therefore, it is argued that the spirit of *danil minjok* has led, to some extent, to improper behaviour amongst some Koreans. It also causes some Koreans to have exclusive attitudes towards, and discriminate against, people of different ethnic, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds. This ethnocentric behavior appears to be similar to that of some of the Corinthian Christians in the day of Paul. They possessed wealth and high status and tended to have exclusive attitudes towards the others of low status. These tendencies developed into divisions among the members in the Corinthian Christian community (1 Cor 11:18-19; 12:25). In reaction to this unhelpful attitude, Paul insists that they should all be united in one spirit regardless of different races and different social classes. This is attested in his words, “For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptised into one body – Jews or Greek, slaves or free – and all were made to drink of one Spirit” (1 Cor 12:12-13). In these words, Paul appears to have encouraged the Corinthian Christian community to transcend ethnic, gender, and social boundaries and to be open and welcoming to

\(^{103}\) Korean migrant churches tend to keep their own mono-cultural tradition and to have exclusive attitudes towards people of different ethnic origins in a wider multicultural society (e.g. Moon, “Korean American Dream,” 233-34; Han, “Korean Christianity,” 114-135). D.A. Carson criticises the exclusiveness of Korean migrant churches in America (D.A. Carson, *Love in Hard Places* [Wheaton: Crossway, 2002], 95; http://happyvil.hani.co.kr/arti/happyvil/happyvil_news05/72400.html, accessed on 1/02/06).
people of different ethnic origins and different social classes. This idea is also clearly exhibited in Galatians 3:28 (cf. Col 3:11) where Paul says, “there is neither Jew nor Greek…neither slave nor free…neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” For a better understanding of Paul’s broader idea of openness and inclusiveness toward people of different ethnic, gender, and social backgrounds in his epistles, we need to examine these texts carefully, including Galatians 3:28, since they address the same issues of ethnic and cultural identity.

In recent Pauline scholarship, the interpretation of Galatians 3:28 is controversial. John M.G. Barclay claims that in Galatians 3:28 Paul argues that in the Christian community the gospel and love of Christ should be emphasised more than any particular ethnic cultural traditions, and that the commitment to Christ enables Christians to encompass simultaneously diverse cultural particularities. This is because the gospel of Christ creates a new community where ethnic and cultural barriers are broken down among its members and variant cultural traditions can be practised. A particular culture such as the Jewish one shouldn’t be “absolutised or allowed to gain hegemony” in this new community. This, however, doesn’t mean Jewish Christians were pressured to abandon observance of their cultural customs such as circumcision, Sabbath, and dietary laws. I agree with Barclay’s analysis and argue that in the same way Paul’s teachings in 1 Corinthians do not require Koreans to

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105 John M.G. Barclay, ““Neither Jew nor Greek”: Multiculturalism and the New Perspective on Paul” in Mark G. Brett (ed.), *Ethnicity and the Bible* (Brill; Boston; Leiden, 2002) 197-214, esp. 211.
106 See Barclay, ““Neither Jew nor Greek”,” 211; also *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora: From Alexander to Trajan (323 BCE – 117 CE)* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996), 385. *It is worth noting, moreover, that this way of understanding of Jewish culture is adopted as an alternative view by recent Pauline scholars like G.P. Waters who belong to the circle of Reformed traditions. They attempt to mediate the understandings of New Perspective scholarship into the traditional Reformation perspectives especially in relation to the Pauline phrase of ‘works of the law’ and doctrine of justification (for detail see Guy Prentiss Waters, *Justification and the New Perspectives on Paul: A Review and Response* [Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2004], 191-212).*
deny all of their cultural heritage in favour of ‘Western Christianity’.

In opposition to this view, however, Daniel Boyarin states that Galatians 3:28 shows the Pauline idea of “a non-differentiated, non-hierarchical humanity,” whereby Paul sought to eradicate human difference as expressed in terms of ethnicity, hierarchy, and gender.\(^\text{107}\) He instead claimed a “universal humanity” and coerced a sameness that neglects cultural differences and ethnicity.\(^\text{108}\) In this way, according to Boyarin, Paul disregarded and devalued human cultural particularities, especially those of the Jews. Thereby, Paul devalued the genealogy of the Jews and the significance of circumcision in Jewish ethnicity, which was “the very symbol of genealogy.”\(^\text{109}\) Further evidence of this is that Paul allegorised and spiritualised literal and physical circumcision and described it as a spiritual experience in Christ.\(^\text{110}\)

Such a program of ‘ethnic cleansing’ in the name of Paul’s gospel is evident in some aspects of the Western Christian mission to Korea. As stated above, for example, from their Western Christian perspective early Christian missionaries to Korea devalued the significance of ancestral veneration (\textit{josang soongbae}) in Korean culture and regarded it as idol worship. Yet it plays an essential part in shaping Korean-Confucian cultural identity.\(^\text{111}\)

Philip F. Esler, in some agreement with Boyarin, asserts that “an ethnic ascription is one which classifies persons in terms of their basic, most general identity…determined by their origin and background.”\(^\text{112}\) The Jews in the Christian community of Galatia ascribed to themselves “the status of an ethnic group by

\(^{109}\) Boyarin, \textit{Radical Jew}, 8, 120.
\(^{110}\) Boyarin, \textit{Radical Jew}, 80, 144-5.
reference to their descent from their glorious ancestors Abraham (and Sarah).”\textsuperscript{113} This Jewish ascription motivated the Jews to maintain their ethnic identity and to defend the boundaries which separated them from the Gentiles. According to Esler, Paul, however, opposed them and redefined as Abraham’s descendants as only those who believed in Jesus Christ as Saviour rather than the Jews. “Mixed Jewish-Gentile table-fellowship” seriously attacked such Jewish identity boundaries.\textsuperscript{114} So the Jews and strict Jewish-Christians banned the Gentiles from participating in table fellowship with them. As a result, in the Christian community of Galatia there were inter-group conflicts between some Jewish believers and the Gentile believers.\textsuperscript{115} Esler sees it as inevitable that a new ‘ethnos’ – that of the ‘Christians’ – will eventually replace all ethnic differences.

This sort of understanding leads some Korean Christians (as it did some Western missionaries beforehand) to believe that all Christians, regardless of their different ethnic origins, will end up as members of the same universal culture, as it were, a ‘Kingdom-of-God’ culture – a culture which often just reflects the ‘invisible’ dominant culture rather than a transforming ‘Christian’ multi-culture. Therein no one claims his/her own ethnic cultural particularity but instead embraces a general universal Christian ‘ethnos’ and culture as his/her new ethnic cultural identity. In so doing, some Korean Christians put more emphasis on engagement in “the task of participation in God’s own work of establishing His reign in the world” than on considering the expression and practice of their own assumed ethnic cultural customs in wider multicultural societies such as Australia and America.\textsuperscript{116} It is a reflection of this, for example, that Korea is the world’s second largest country today in terms of

\textsuperscript{113}Esler, “Group Boundaries,” 222.
\textsuperscript{114}Esler, “Group Boundaries,” 225.
\textsuperscript{115}Esler, “Group Boundaries,” 228-230.
\textsuperscript{116}Moon, “Korean American Dream,” 247.
engagement in Christian world-missions and sending Christian missionaries overseas.\textsuperscript{117}

Some Korean Christians (including myself, formerly) believe that conversion to the Christian faith challenges us to stop expressing our own Korean-Confucian cultural identity and leave it behind, and instead accept a brand-new Christian (church) culture or a ‘Kingdom-of-God’ culture. We consider the former secular and opposed to the latter. We also think that the two cultures shouldn’t coexist in a church and that every church all around the world, no matter where it is located, should neglect the cultural particularity of its immediate context and have the same Christian and ‘Kingdom-of-God’ culture.

There is, however, a question unsolved: is that the whole point that Paul addresses in Galatians 3:28 as well as 1 Corinthians 12:13? I suggest that in these texts Paul is not arguing that ethnic, cultural, social, and gender distinctions (differentiations) should be removed from his communities (1 Cor 7:17-24; Gal 2:15; cf. Col 3:22). He rather encourages Christians to maintain their racial (cultural) particularities and social status (“Every one should remain in the state in which he/she was called,” 1 Cor 7:20) and be transformed/renewed from within. Paul, for example, argues that Gentile-believers (the uncircumcised) in Corinth did not need to become like Jewish-believers (the circumcised). Paul says, “Was any one at the time of his call uncircumcised? Let him not seek circumcision” (1 Cor 7:18). He also maintains that Christ-believing slaves “did not cease to be slaves” except (and significantly so) in the eyes of God and the ekklēsia (1 Cor 7:21-22; cf. Col 3:22).\textsuperscript{118}

\textsuperscript{117}The Korea World Missions Association has released recently some statistics on the Korean mission. The number of Korean missionaries as of February 2006 is 14,086 in 180 countries (about 19,000 according to non-official counts)” (http://www.international.ucla.edu/korea/events/showevent.asp?eventid=5347, accessed on 27/04/07).

\textsuperscript{118}Dunn, Galatians, 207; similarly Witherington, Grace, 278.
Nonetheless, as Dunn claims, in Galatians 3:28 Paul is saying that these factors, “as distinctions, marking racial, social and gender differentiation, which were thought to indicate or imply relative worth or value or privileged status before God, …no longer have that significance” in Christian communities. In other words, no particular ethnic people such as the Jews find any privileged favour in the eyes of God or benefit by observance of their cultural customs to become justified and reckoned righteous before God. Instead, all, regardless of whether they are Jews or Gentiles, are justified by (or through) faith in and of Jesus Christ (Gal 2:16-17). Yet Paul does not suggest that the Jewish believers should ban practising their cultural traditions in the Christian community. He rather appears to have encouraged them (not proselytes) to exercise their traditional customs and maintain Jewish identity as long as these Jewish customs were not seen as a means for justification in Christ (Gal 2:15-21; cf. Rom 3:1-2).

Furthermore, it appears that Paul recognised the existence of ethnic (cultural), social, and sexual barriers amongst the members in the Galatian Christian community. He thus commanded all the Galatian believers to be united in Jesus Christ who transcends such racial, social, and gender distinctions. Paul states, “…you are all one in Christ Jesus” (pantes humeis eis este en christō iēsou, Gal 3:28). As Dunn states:

In which case the character of the ‘oneness’ becomes clear: not as a levelling and abolishing of all racial, social or gender differences, but as an integration of just such differences into a common participation ‘in Christ’, wherein they enhance (rather than detract from) the unity of the body, and enrich the mutual interdependence and service of its members. In other words, it is a oneness, because such differences cease to be a barrier and cause of pride or regret or embarrassment, and become rather a means to display the diverse richness of God’s creation and grace, both in the acceptance of the ‘all’ and in the gifting of each.

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119 Dunn, Galatians, 207.
120 See Witherington, Grace, 278.
121 Dunn, Galatians, 208.
In a similar sense, Paul insists on unity in diversity amongst the social and racial factions of the Corinthian Christians in 1 Corinthians 12:12-13. He admonished them to be united as one body of Christ (v. 12) and “bonded together by the Spirit” (v. 13), since their ethnic (cultural) and social differentiation caused divisions (schismata) in the Christian community (1 Cor 1:10; 11:18-19). In other words, Paul encouraged them to leave the improper conduct of factionalism and transcend their racial, cultural, and social barriers. They should then embrace one another as brothers and sisters in Christ, no matter what race and no matter what social class they belonged to.

This distinctive Pauline message presents a challenge to Korean Christians who have ethnocentric tendencies, to develop inclusive attitudes towards people of different races and different ethnic origins. This is also an encouragement to (re)build Christian communities to be more multicultural and welcoming of all people, regardless of different ethnic and social backgrounds. This reflects Paul’s ecclesiological vision. He was an advocate of Christian communities that comprise a diversity of ethnic/cultural, social/economic, age, and gender distinctions, but which maintain harmony and unity amongst followers of Jesus (1 Cor 12:12-14; Gal 3:28).

\[122\text{Hays, First Corinthians, 214.}\]