

PAUL'S NEW CREATION: VISION FOR A NEW WORLD AND COMMUNITY  
IN THE MIDST OF EMPIRES

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To my beautiful and beloved wife, Gieun Kim  
and  
To my lovely and sweet sons, Yejun and Timothy

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## INTRODUCTION

On a hot and humid day in the summer of 1902 in *Chemulpo*,<sup>1</sup> Korea, people gathered in front of a big white paper posted on a street wall. A man from the crowd came to the front of the crowd and read these words out loud for those who did not know how to read. He started to read:

The climate is suitable for everyone and there is no severe heat or cold. There are schools on every island. English is taught and the tuition is free. Jobs for the farmers are available all the year around for those who are healthy and decent in behavior. Monthly payment is fifteen dollars in American money (sixty-seven won in Korean money). There are ten hours of work a day with Sunday free. The expenses for housing, fuel, water, and hospital will be paid by the employer.<sup>2</sup>

The white paper was an advertisement posted by David W. Deshler, a man who was hired by the Hawaiian Sugar Planters Association to recruit Korean laborers for sugar plantations on the Hawaiian Islands. For many Koreans who had been suffering not only from the effects of a severe famine and cholera pandemic, but also from corrupt behavior of officials and an impotent government, this advertisement was attractive enough to compel them to leave their families behind and to depart for a “paradise,” dreaming for a new world where they could live with dignity. Like the immigrants who followed them, the early Korean immigrants came to the United States full of dreams about a new world.

The Bible contains many images of a new heaven and new earth. The first verse of Genesis is a statement that God created the heavens and the earth (Gen 1:1). The narrative of Noah’s Flood, particularly the covenant that God makes with living things, shows that God can destroy and re-create all existing things into a new creation (Gen 9:1-

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<sup>1</sup> *Chemulpo* is the former name of the city of *Incheon* where the international airport is located.

<sup>2</sup> Bong-youn Choy, *Koreans in America* (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1979), 75.



17).<sup>3</sup> The prophet Isaiah also mentions the theme of God's new creation in Isa 43 and 65. In Isaiah's prophecy, the disappearance of the old things and the appearance of the new happen simultaneously, somewhat overlapping with each other. Isaiah says that we should neither remember the former things nor consider the old things (Isa 43:18) because God is about to create a new thing (Isa 43:19). Isaiah's idea of God's new creation is fully described in Isa 65:17, "For I am about to create new heavens and a new earth; the former things shall not be remembered or come to mind" (NRSV). Paul, who must have been familiar with Isaiah's writing, refers to and builds on Isaiah's vision of God's new creation in one of his major theological and pastoral arguments, which can be found in both Gal 6:15 and 2 Cor 5:17.

Scholars have adopted different perspectives for their interpretations of Paul's new creation passages (Gal 6:15 and 2 Cor 5:17). Some scholars approach these passages from an anthropological point of view equating God's new creation with inner renewal within an individual believer through "spiritual rebirth by baptism" or "conversion." Others interpret God's new creation from a cosmological perspective, emphasizing the cosmic impact of Christ's death and resurrection, which has initiated the replacement of the old realm with God's eschatological new world. According to the cosmological perspective, the scope of God's new creation is not restricted to an individual believer but instead inclusive of all created things. There are also minor interpretations in which scholars equate God's new creation with a community, Christ, or eschatological tension.

These distinctive scholarly interpretations are valuable contributions to an understanding of Paul's view of God's new creation. Despite the value of these

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<sup>3</sup> Sejong Chun, "New Creation" in *The Cambridge Dictionary of Christianity* (ed. Daniel Patte; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 864.

contributions, they are not directly useful for most Korean immigrant believers who are struggling to survive in tough living environments and facing racist attitudes and cultural and language barriers in America, because the interpretations are primarily focused on finding “the true meaning” of the phrase by treating it as an *abstract concept*. The *conceptualization* of God’s new creation is not much help for most Korean immigrant believers and their churches because they are seeking an interpretation of the new creation that provides them a concrete model for establishing God’s new social order in their everyday lives on American soil. Like the first Korean immigrants who came to Hawaii, believing in the existence of a new world based on an advertisement posted on a wall, current Korean immigrants expect to see the embodiment of a new world in their lives.

In my inter(con)textual reading of Paul’s new creation texts, I will attempt to examine how Paul’s vision of the new creation has been expressed in tangible ways through his missionary and pastoral works as well as for the centuries up to my own life context as a believer and preacher in a Korean immigrant church located in the city of Los Angeles, California. I will pay close attention to the way Paul has tried to establish God’s new world not only through his rhetorical arguments in the midst of the power dynamics between the Galatian churches and the Jerusalem church, but also through his anti-imperial rhetoric and his discussion of the *ekklēsia* as an eschatological alternative community.

For my inter(con)textual interpretation, I hope to bring several questions to my readings of Paul’s new creation passages focusing on how Paul endeavored to set up God’s new world through the *ekklēsia* in the midst of the imperial powers: Why did the

Korean ethnic church fail to play a pivotal role of leadership, when it was urgently needed during and after the 1992 Los Angeles riots? Why did the ethnic church stay within its comfort zone and not propose a vision for God's new world not only for the Korean immigrant community, but also for the broader society of America?

My interpretation of Paul's new creation will unfold in seven chapters. In the first chapter, I will introduce and evaluate the various scholarly understandings of the new creation such as those developed in anthropological, cosmological, and significant minor approaches. In the second chapter, I will explain my methodology, inter(con)textual interpretation, by elucidating the production of meaning and the role of the readers' life context in their interpretations. In the third and fourth chapters, I will present my readings of the Pauline passages where the term "creation" or "new creation" appears, focusing my investigation upon these key texts: Romans 8; 2 Corinthians 5; and Galatians 6. Then, in the sixth chapter, I will inquire into the issue of power dynamics between Paul and Jerusalem focusing on the theme of Paul's opponents and Paul's presentation of a new identity for the Galatians. In the seventh chapter, I will describe Paul's collection for the poor saints in Jerusalem as an effort on his part to create a new and alternative economic system within the bigger project of establishing God's eschatological new world in the midst of surrounding imperial power structures.

## CHAPTER ONE

### OVERVIEW OF PAULINE SCHOLARSHIP ON PAUL'S NEW CREATION

In the previous chapter, I have briefly introduced various understandings of Paul's *καινή κτίσις*.<sup>1</sup> In this chapter, I will fully present and evaluate these approaches. Several commentators have categorized these approaches into three options: “new creature,” “new creation,” and “new community.”<sup>2</sup> In my discernment, interpreters' comprehension of the meaning of *καινή κτίσις* can be classified into three groups: First, there is an “anthropological” approach that focuses on the inner renewal of an individual believer. Second, there is a “cosmological” approach that emphasizes the inauguration of a new cosmic order that replaces the “old” order. These two interpretive choices represent the dominant position in current scholarly debate on the meaning of *καινή κτίσις*. “Marginal voices” have excavated new connotations of *καινή κτίσις*, but have been ignored by many critics. Some biblical scholars suggest that *καινή κτίσις* refers to a new community. Others attempt to overcome the binary opposition between cosmological and anthropological points of view by suggesting a combined and inclusive approach to *καινή κτίσις*. More constructive and plausible suggestions will be introduced in the following sections.

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<sup>1</sup> The term, *καινή κτίσις* and “new creation” will be used interchangeably.

<sup>2</sup> See, Moyer V. Hubbard, *New Creation in Paul's Letters and Thought* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 2-5. Similarly, Adams arranges scholarly approaches into three groups according to their focuses: “the individual believer, the believing community, or a new cosmic order.” Edward Adams, *Constructing the World: A Study in Paul's Cosmological Language* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2000), 226.

## 1. Anthropological Understanding of Paul's New Creation

The anthropological interpretation often emphasizes the transformation of an individual through conversion, baptism, or through the work of the Holy Spirit within a believer. The process of change can be described as a “rebirth,” a “radical inner renewal,” and “getting a new nature.” This anthropological understanding has been the dominant option from the time of the early interpreters<sup>3</sup> like Gregory of Nyssa,<sup>4</sup> John Chrysostom,<sup>5</sup> Jerome,<sup>6</sup> and Augustine.<sup>7</sup> Reformers like Calvin<sup>8</sup> and Luther<sup>9</sup> also preferred this

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<sup>3</sup> Theodoret of Cyrus, in his commentary on Galatians, proposes a somewhat broader meaning of *καινή κτίσις*: “Now, by new creation he [Paul] refers properly to the transformation in things coming after the resurrection from the death: at that time the creation will be clothed with immortality.” *Theodoret of Cyrus: Commentary on the Letters of St. Paul* (trans. Robert C. Hill, vol. 2; Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2001), 24.

<sup>4</sup> Gregory of Nyssa believes *καινή κτίσις* is “a new creature.” He explains who is a new creature: “A new creature he called the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in a pure and blameless soul removed from evil and wickedness and shamefulness.” *On the Christian Mode of Life*. In *The Fathers of the Church: A New Translation* (trans. Virginia Callahan, vol. 58; Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1967), 141-42.

<sup>5</sup> Chrysostom explains that *καινή κτίσις* refers to “a new creature”: “‘If any man is in Christ,’ he is ‘a new creature.’” John Chrysostom, *The Homilies of Saint John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople, on the Epistles of Paul to The Corinthians* (trans. Talbot W. Chambers; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994), 332.

<sup>6</sup> Jerome, in his commentary on Galatians, associates *καινή κτίσις* and a bodily transformation. He argues, “we who have already now been raised with Christ in baptism and reborn into a new self should be slaves to neither circumcision nor uncircumcision.” *St. Jerome: Commentary on Galatians* (trans. Andrew Cain; Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2010), 265.

<sup>7</sup> Augustine, in his sermon 212, quotes Ephesians 4:24 and 2 Corinthians 5:17 and Galatians 6:15 and says, “putting on the new self...you may be a new creature.” *The Works of Saints Augustine: A Translation for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Part III-Sermons Vol. 6: Sermons 184-229Z* (ed. John E. Rotelle; trans. Edmund Hill; New Rochelle, New York: New City Press, 1993), 137. Augustine’s quotation of 2 Corinthians 5:17 also appears in his sermon 26,12 and the term, *καινή κτίσις* is translated as “new creature.” In his writing, *Grace and Free Will*, Augustine clarifies his understanding of Paul’s “new creature” by connecting it with the Psalmist prayer in Psalm 5:12, “Create a clean heart in me, O God.” See, *Saint Augustine: The Teacher, The Free Choice of the Will, Grace and Free Will* (trans. Robert P. Russell; Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1968), 272. In Augustine’s book, *Answer to Faustus, a Manichean*, the same quotation from 2 Corinthians 5:17 appears two times (11, 1 and 8) and translated into “new creation” by different translator. Nevertheless, Augustine’s understanding of the term remains unchanged. He explains, “Hence, all the new creation, that is, the people made new by faith.” *The Works of Saints Augustine: A Translation for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Part I-Books Vol. 20: Answer to Faustus, a Manichean* (ed. Boniface Ramsey; trans. Roland Teske,; Hyde Park, New York: New City Press, 2007), 122.

anthropological approach. It is believed that this anthropological understanding had been the dominant option until the time of the Second World War.<sup>10</sup>

Many modern commentators continue to subscribe to the individual-focused explanation of Paul's *καινή κτίσις*. For example, for Alan Cole *καινή κτίσις* refers to “the regenerating work of God in the individual Christian rather than to the total cosmic result.”<sup>11</sup> Timothy George clarifies the relationship between conversion and being a new person. According to him, Paul's *καινή κτίσις* “involves the whole process of conversion: the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit leading to repentance and faith...continual growth in holiness leading to eventual conformity to the image of Christ.” George also connects *καινή κτίσις* with new nature: “The new creation implies a new nature with a new system of desires, affections, and habits.”<sup>12</sup> For Philip G. Ryken, the new creation is an inner transformation: “What does count is a new creation, the inward transformation by which the Holy Spirit turns a sinner into a whole new person... The theological term

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<sup>8</sup> Calvin explains the meaning of the first half of 2 Corinthians 5: 17, “If *any one* is desirous to hold some place *in Christ*, that is, in the kingdom of Christ, or in the Church, let him be a *new creature*.” John Calvin, *Commentary on the Epistles of Paul the Apostle to The Corinthians* (trans. John Pringle: Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1948), 233. In his commentary on Galatians, Calvin continuously designates *καινή κτίσις* “*new creature*,” and regards the term is “unquestionably contrasted with” the *cosmos*. John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul to the Galatians and Ephesians* (trans. William Pringle; Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1948), 184-85.

<sup>9</sup> Luther not only translates the term *καινή κτίσις* “new creature,” but also connects it with the image of God. For him, being a new creature means an inward renewal. New creature “is the renewing of the mind by the Holy Ghost... For when the heart hath conceived a new light, a new judgment, and new motions, through the Gospel, it cometh to pass that the inward senses are also renewed.” Martin Luther, *Commentary on Saint Paul's Epistle to the Galatians* (trans. Erasmus Middleton: London: William Tegg and Co, 1875), 473.

<sup>10</sup> On the summary of the anthropological interpretations, see John Riches, *Galatians through the Centuries* (Victoria, Australia: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), 289-298.

<sup>11</sup> R. Alan Cole, *Galatians* (Tyndale New Testament Commentaries; Grand Rapid: Wm B. Eerdmans, 1989), 235.

<sup>12</sup> Timothy George, *Galatians* (NAC 30; Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 438.

for this inward transformation is *regeneration*. In regeneration, the Holy Spirit makes the believer a new creature in Christ.”<sup>13</sup> Those scholars associate Paul’s *καινή κτίσις* with conversion, baptism, regeneration, and new things that God creates inside of believers.

Moyer Hubbard takes a more radical position than other scholars who favor the anthropological reading. He emphasizes a believer’s personal conversion and understands *καινή κτίσις* as God’s creative work in an individual. He approaches Paul’s *καινή κτίσις* from the perspective that he acquired from his interpretation of Jewish apocalyptic writings such as *Jubilees* and *Joseph and Aseneth*. Hubbard argues that he wants to compare those writings with Paul’s new creation motif.<sup>14</sup> He particularly depends on *Joseph and Aseneth*, which describes the romance between a Jewish man, Joseph and an Egyptian virgin, Aseneth.

The central theme of the romance story, according to Hubbard’s explanation, is “conveyed through its elaborate and sophisticated portrayal of Aseneth’s conversion to Judaism.”<sup>15</sup> Her conversion should be understood as a new creation and “a movement from darkness to light, error to truth, and, most importantly, death to life.”<sup>16</sup> Her consumption of honey symbolizes a new birth, a result of her conversion to Judaism. Although Hubbard admits, “there is no evidence that *Joseph and Aseneth* was a literary influence on any New Testament writer,”<sup>17</sup> he ardently discusses the ideas of moving

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<sup>13</sup> Philip Graham Ryken, *Galatians* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P & R Publishing, 2005), 278. Emphasis is original.

<sup>14</sup> Hubbard, *New Creation in Paul’s Letters*, 7.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 74.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 240.

from death to life and permanent discontinuity with someone's past as the key elements for understanding Paul's new creation:

Aseneth's conversion is depicted as a movement from death to life, and is unfolded through the vocabulary of 'Spirit,' 'newness,' and 'life.' *Joseph and Aseneth's* use of cosmic imagery to describe conversion, along with its emphasis on transformation and new birth can all be related to the soteriological symbolism of Paul's death-life/new-creation imagery, and provide a solid foundation for comparative analysis. Moreover, as the most radical transfer-symbolism available, new creation is used by the author of *Joseph and Aseneth* to emphasize Aseneth's complete and irrevocable break with her pagan past, which is precisely the context of this symbolism in Paul's letters.<sup>18</sup>

Hubbard is, in my judgment, much more dependent on the Jewish "romance" story than he realizes. He considers Aseneth's conversion similar to Paul's experience of encounter with the risen Lord on the way to Damascus. In Hubbard's understanding, conversion is "a complete and irrevocable break with one's former way of life."<sup>19</sup> His focus on personal conversion as a new creation, the idea that he inferred from his reading of *Joseph and Aseneth*, becomes a primary viewpoint through which he reads Pauline letters.

The emphasis on individual "new birth" through conversion naturally leads him to adopt the anthropological perspective in reading Paul's new creation texts, 2 Cor 5:17 and Gal 6:15. Hubbard argues that those texts "provide ample evidence of Paul's reflection upon his own conversion...his understanding of the person in Christ as a new creation issued from his own experience in the Damascus Christophany."<sup>20</sup> After his own analysis of 2 Corinthians 5:17, he argues that "there is no compelling evidence" for the cosmological understanding of the passage, stating that "[q]uite the opposite is true" and

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 237.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 186.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 240.



that the verse, therefore, should be understood anthropologically.<sup>21</sup> Although admitting that an anthropological interpretation of Gal 6:15 is less clear than that of 2 Cor 5:17,<sup>22</sup> he reaches the same conclusion after his investigation of Galatians: “Paul has in mind God’s new creative work within the individual.”<sup>23</sup> Throughout his reading of Paul’s new creation, Hubbard persists in emphasizing radical transformation of an individual through conversion and maintains ardently that the anthropological reading is the superior approach.

Although I am planning to provide more assessments on Hubbard’s arguments when I deal with the new creation texts, Galatian 6:15 and 2 Corinthians 5:17, I want to raise a question about his selection of *Joseph and Aseneth* as the work of Jewish literature to compare with Paul’s new creation and as a primary lens through which he reads Pauline passages. Why does he select *Joseph and Aseneth* instead of *Jubilees* and other apocalyptic texts where the term, *καινή κτίσις* is clearly used (Jub. 1:29 and 4:26<sup>24</sup>)? He seems to provide a convoluted explanation for his selection in the following passage:

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 183.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 232.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> *Jubilees* 1:29: “be holy. And the angel of the presence who went before the camp of Israel took the tables of the divisions of the years -from the time of the creation- of the law and of the testimony of the weeks of the jubilees, according to the individual years, according to all the number of the jubilees [according, to the individual years], from the day of the [new] creation when the heavens and the earth shall be renewed and all their creation according to the powers of the heaven, and according to all the creation of the earth, until the sanctuary of the Lord shall be made in Jerusalem on Mount Zion, and all the luminaries be renewed for healing and for peace and for blessing for all the elect of Israel, and that thus it may be from that day and unto all the days of the earth”; and 4:26: “(even) sweet spices acceptable before the Lord on the Mount. For the Lord has four places on the earth, the Garden of Eden, and the Mount of the East, and this mountain on which thou art this day, Mount Sinai, and Mount Zion (which) will be sanctified in the new creation for a sanctification of the earth; through it will the earth be sanctified from all (its) guilt and its uncleanness through.” See <http://wesley.nnu.edu/sermons-essays-books/noncanonical-literature/the-book-of-jubilees/> Emphasis added.

Representing both Palestinian and Diaspora Judaism, the former [*Jubilees*] is the work most often used to explicate Paul's new-creation motif, while the latter [*Joseph and Aseneth*] is the work least often used... Of the apocalyptic works usually cited in reference to 2 Corinthians 5.17 and Galatians 6.15, *Jubilees* lies in closest chronological proximity to Paul, and is the only work where the precise phrase "new creation" occurs *twice*. While *Joseph and Aseneth* is not often noted in the commentaries on 2 Corinthians 5.17 and Galatians 6.15, its elaborate description of Aseneth's re-creation contains striking parallels to prominent themes in Paul's letters, and deserves more than the passing reference it occasionally receives.<sup>25</sup>

Hubbard's effort to clarify his position for choosing *Joseph and Aseneth* over *Jubilees* fails to provide a persuasive reason for his choice. He argues that Aseneth's personal conversion to Judaism "contains striking parallels" to Paul's new creation. As he clearly admits, the romance story does not use the term, *καινή κτίσις*, but *Jubilees* contains the term twice. It seems as if Hubbard cannot avoid admitting the fact that in *Jubilees* the new creation is connected to a renewal of the cosmic order rather than a rebirth of an individual. Hubbard's references to *Jubilees* chapter 1 contain language associated with the cosmological approach at several points: "[a]s the theme of the final verse of the opening chapter, the announcement of an impending *cosmic renewal* brings this eschatological preface to a crescendo while casting its shadow the length of the book"<sup>26</sup>; "new creation in *Jubilees* is intimately connected with *the defeat of the earthly and demonic powers* responsible for Israel's predicament, and this is entirely consistent with the primary function of the *eschatological material in the apocalypses*"<sup>27</sup>; "[b]attling both earthly and heavenly forces, *the apocalyptic visionaries* felt the cosmos itself closing in around them, and it is hardly surprising that their picture of the future was that of a

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<sup>25</sup> Hubbard, *New Creation in Paul's Letters*, 7-8.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 36. Emphasis added.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 48. Emphasis added.

*completely transformed universe.*<sup>28</sup> Through his devoted investigation about the meaning of *καινή κτίσις* in *Jubilees*, Hubbard finds that the new creation is not an individual's rebirth or renewal but a transformation and restoration of the cosmic order.

In *Jubilees*, he rarely finds any evidence for his anthropological reading of the new creation in terms of talking about "God's creative work in an individual." What he discovers, on the contrary, is that the new creation is possible through the "cosmic renewal," resulting from the conquest of the heavenly and earthly evil powers. In my judgment, the concept and context of the new creation in *Jubilees* provides more convincing comparison with Paul's new creation rather than with *Joseph and Aseneth* as Hubbard maintains.

### Summary and Evaluation

Those scholars who approach Paul's *καινή κτίσις* from an anthropological viewpoint often pay close attention to the personal experience of being renewed through conversion or of spiritual rebirth through baptism, which results in personal transformation. They believe that Paul uses *καινή κτίσις* to refer to God's creative work happening within an individual believer, which is closely related to personal salvation.

There are several strong points in favor of this perspective. First, this option has been very attractive to many from the early interpreters of Pauline epistles up to modern commentators. Second, it is very practical. By emphasizing the personal experience of being renewed and/or of becoming radically new by breaking with one's past, individual believers can "feel" God's creative work in themselves as individuals by participating in

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 53. Emphasis added.

religious ritual like baptism or undergoing the religious experience of repentance or conversion. Since radical personal changes as a result of being a new creature are often “recognizable” when interacting with others, church leaders readily encourage the believers to keep up the good process of personal transformation. According to this approach, God’s creative work for an individual believer becomes something “visual.” Third, the importance of an individual can be highlighted. The inner space of an independent character becomes a “sacred” place where God’s innovative and redemptive action is happening.

However, this approach will inevitably have weaknesses. First, this option confines the impact of God’s new creation within the boundary of an individual believer’s inner place. As a result, it excludes a broader meaning of the new creation. Second, by focusing on the inner renewal of a believing person, it can neglect the fact that the whole creation, including human and non-human creatures, is an inseparably interwoven community. Third, it can also ignore the existence of evil powers that enslaves human beings and other created things under their control and separates them from the reign of God and indeed from God-self.

## 2. Cosmological Understanding of Paul’s New Creation

If the anthropological understanding of Paul’s new creation has enjoyed the dominant position until the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the cosmological approach has been a major challenger. Scholars who prefer to adopt a cosmological perspective on *καινή κτίσις* often regard the Jewish apocalyptic tradition as a significant background for Paul’s theology and stress the cosmic impact of Christ’s death on the cross and of Christ’s

resurrection. Paul's new creation inaugurated by Christ's death and resurrection, therefore, has much broader connotations.

Ernst Käsemann is one of the scholars who have ardently employed an apocalyptic perspective in understanding Pauline letters. In his interpretation of Romans 8:18-30, Käsemann elucidates the broader meaning of *κτίσις* and argues that it refers to all creation including human beings.<sup>29</sup> According to his explanation, there is no sharp distinction between human and "other creatures," because they are all deeply interwoven: "By allowing Christians to suffer with Christ, the Spirit brings about the transforming of the old creation into an expectancy of glorification and an initial participation in this. Hope, then, reaches beyond believers to creation as a whole... Since Paul understands eschatological freedom as salvation in a cosmic dimension."<sup>30</sup> Through his "apocalyptic interpretation" of Paul, Käsemann maintains that Paul's theology should be understood in terms of Christ's redemption of the whole world by creating a new cosmic order that replaces the old one.

J. Christian Beker further develops Käsemann's "apocalyptic interpretation" of Paul and claims, "Jewish apocalyptic *motifs* dominate Paul's thought."<sup>31</sup> According to Beker, Paul's continuing conviction is that the cosmic power of Christ's death and resurrection has inaugurated "a new future for the world."<sup>32</sup> Even though Paul has received and has been influenced by Jewish apocalyptic traditions, he has the freedom to

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<sup>29</sup> Ernst Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans* (trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley; Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1980), 233.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 234.

<sup>31</sup> J. Christian Beker, *The Triumph of God: The essence of Paul's Thought* (trans. Loren T. Stuckenbruck; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 19. Emphasis is original.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

modify them for various situations in his ministry. This is so because, for Paul, “tradition is always *interpreted tradition*, formulated in the freedom of the Spirit.”<sup>33</sup> Beker’s explanation of Paul’s apocalyptic perspective is helpful in understanding its essential concern: “Apocalyptic is an attempt to overcome the discrepancy between the harsh realities of everyday life and the promises of God.”<sup>34</sup>

Among Beker’s “four central motifs of Jewish apocalyptic”<sup>35</sup> that have shaped Paul’s thought, the motif regarding a dualistic understanding of the world is noteworthy. “In Jewish apocalyptic,” as Beker explains, “the motif of dualism expresses the antithesis between the evil powers of the world and the representatives of the kingdom of God to come.”<sup>36</sup> The battles between the Spirit vs. the flesh; the faith vs. the law; the foolishness of the cross vs. the wisdom of the world; and powers of death vs. powers of life inescapably cause tension and, as a result, suffering.<sup>37</sup>

J. Louis Martyn, who agrees that the apocalyptic influence on Paul’s thought is significant, approaches *καινή κτίσις* from the viewpoint of apocalyptic battles between cosmic powers. As previous commentators have highlighted the cosmic effect of Christ’s death on cross, Martyn argues that the event of Christ’s cross is “the watershed event for the whole of the cosmos, affecting every thing after it.” In his opinion, God’s action of sending his son and the Spirit into the realm of human beings is an “invasion,” the start of

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 16-17.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>35</sup> Beker’s “four central motifs of Jewish apocalyptic” are “(1) the faithfulness and vindication of God, (2) the universal salvation of the world, (3) the dualistic structure of the world, and 4) the imminent coming of God in glory.” Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

an apocalyptic war: “Because the old cosmos had fallen into the hands of powers alien to God... God had to invade enemy territory, sending his Son and the Spirit of his Son, and thereby confronting those powers in an apocalyptic war.”<sup>38</sup> According to Martyn, the two opposite powers at war are the Spirit and the Flesh: “The Spirit and the Flesh constitute an apocalyptic antinomy in the sense that they are two opposed orbs of power, actively at war with one another *since* the advent of the Spirit.” As a result, “The territory in which human beings now live is a newly invaded space, and that means that its structures cannot remain unchanged.”<sup>39</sup> God is, therefore, not just modifying or repairing the old cosmic order but replacing it with the new creation inaugurated by the death and resurrection of Christ and the active role of the Holy Spirit.

Many contemporary scholars have developed the idea of the apocalyptic influence on Paul’s view of the new creation and focused on the cosmological aspect of the new creation. Ulrich Mell, as an exemplary scholar, intensively traces the historical backgrounds and connotations of the term, *καινή κτίσις*, exploring the texts from the Hebrew Bible to the Qumran community, Jewish apocalyptic literature, and rabbinic and diasporic Judaism.<sup>40</sup> Through this exploration and his exegesis of Pauline passages, he ardently supports the cosmological comprehension of the new creation.

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<sup>38</sup> J. Louis Martyn, *Galatians* (AB 33a; New York: Doubleday, 1997), 565. For Martyn’s use of the term “invasion” for God’s creative work in/through Christ, see J. Louis Martyn, “Event in Galatia: Modified Covenantal Nomism versus God’s Invasion of the Cosmos in the Singular Gospel: A Response to J. D. G. Dunn and B. R. Gaventa,” in *Pauline Theology Vol. I: Thessalonians, Philippians, Galatians, Philemon* (ed. Jouette M. Bassler; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994), 160-79.

<sup>39</sup> Martyn, *Galatians*, 573. Emphasis is original.

<sup>40</sup> Ulrich Mell, *Neue Schöpfung: Eine Traditionsgeschichte und Exegetische Studie zu Einem Soteriologischen Grundsatz Paulinischer Theologie* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1989), 47-257.

Some commentators, following a similar line of thought, clearly emphasize that Paul's *καινή κτίσις* is not something happening inside an individual but a radical cosmic change. For example, Jefferey Weima argues, “*καινή κτίσις* refers not simply to the renewal of an individual person but to the presence of a radically new world – a ‘new creation.’”<sup>41</sup> Charles B. Cousar also explains that *καινή κτίσις* is not a particular individual's inner transformation but the creation of “a whole new world.”<sup>42</sup> Robert A. Bryant translates *καινή κτίσις* into “new creative activity of God” and explains, “a new apocalyptic era has dawned” by “the risen crucified Christ.”<sup>43</sup> According to those interpreters, Christ's death and resurrection inaugurated God's new cosmic order and new era and consequently the old world is in the process of being replaced by the new one.

### Summary and Evaluation

Scholars who adopt a cosmological perspective point out the cosmic impact of Christ's death and resurrection and often elucidate the significant influence of Jewish apocalyptic tradition on Paul<sup>44</sup> such as the dualistic structure of the cosmic order between

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<sup>41</sup> Jefferey A. D. Weima, “Gal. 6:11-18: A Hermeneutical Key to the Galatian Letter,” *CTJ* 28 (1993): 90-107.

<sup>42</sup> Charles B. Cousar, *Galatians* (Interpretation; Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1982), 154-55.

<sup>43</sup> Robert A. Bryant, *The Risen Crucified Christ in Galatians* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2001), 159-60.

<sup>44</sup> Aymer who pays attention to the relationship between the notion of the new creation in Jewish apocalyptic writings and that of Paul explicates the dissimilarities between them. According to him, three significant differences are noticeable: 1) “in apocalyptic literature the eschatological age is imminent but nevertheless future. In Paul, however, the new creation is both present and future”; 2) “in apocalyptic literature the arrival of the eschatological age will bring about an abrupt end to the old created order. At the arrival of the new age the old will be completely replaced. In Paul, however, the presence of the new creation through Christ's death and resurrection does not bring an end to the old created order. That old creation continues until the *Parousia*. At that time the old creation will be completely transformed and replaced by the fully realized new creation”; 3) “in apocalyptic literature, God's people are admonished to be steadfast in their allegiance to Him, to endure the sufferings of the present time, and to watch for the



the Spirit and the evil powers. They think that God's redemptive action through Christ and the Holy Spirit is at war against the malicious powers and God is replacing the old world with the new creation. According to them, the impact of the new creation is not confined within an individual believer but extended to all of creation, including human beings.

This cosmological approach has several advantages. First, it recognizes the existence of evil powers that often put all created things under the rule of destructive forces.<sup>45</sup> Second, it acknowledges that Christ's death and resurrection have cosmic impact, which replaces the order of the old world with the new creation. Third, it insightfully explains Jewish apocalyptic influence on Paul, which has framed Paul's basic understanding of the world and God's action for it. Fourth, it stresses the future hope for God's final vindication, by which people can endure and overcome the current suffering.

The cosmological approach also has several weak points. First, it basically carries a dichotomic comprehension of the cosmos: continuous battle between the powers of death and those of life. However because the cosmos, including interwoven human life

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sudden appearing of God's eschatological day...In Paul, on the contrary, Christians live in the present by 'faith made effective through love'...and are empowered by the Spirit...faith, love, and the enabling power of God's Spirit are for Paul the norm of Christian existence at the present time." Albert Joseph Daniel Aymer, *Paul's Understanding of 'KAINÉ KTISIS': Continuity and Discontinuity in Pauline Eschatology* (Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms International, 1985), 174-75.

<sup>45</sup> One of the destructive powers could be sin; or "sin" could be the generic description of all evil, destructive powers. According to the definition of *The Cambridge Dictionary of Christianity*, sin refers to "any human activity or stance opposed to God and God's purposes, separating humans from God. It initiates a process of destruction ruinous for the human community, the natural world, and sinners themselves." The dictionary entry helps us understand that "sin" not only refers to individual immorality or criminal actions, but also includes communal and systematic activities. For example, "unjust economic and political structures produce larger and more pervasive evils than do individual sinners, and may leave individuals caught up in them with no good options. No moral probity at the individual level suffices to fix the faulty structure." This kind of structural evil powers enslaves human beings and other created things to a certain form of existence and behavior. See, Marguerite Shuster, "Sin" in *The Cambridge Dictionary of Christianity* (ed. Daniel Patte; New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 1159-60.

and all created things, is much more complicated than a construction of two conflicting forces, it is hard to draw sharp lines between the good and bad sides. When this cosmological approach is understood in such a dualistic way it is quite problematic; yet, the scholars in this perspective are careful to avoid such a dualism by underscoring the complex interaction of the powers of death and of life – for instance, how the cross and the resurrection are intimately linked. A second potential weakness is that it can ignore the role and responsibility of an individual in God’s new creation. According to this perspective, at one time or another each human individual is under the regime of either the powers of death or those of life; therefore, he/she might be conceived as remaining passively in God’s redemptive actions; thus, scholars in this perspective carefully emphasize, following Paul, that while passing from one regime to the other is beyond one’s control, once in the sphere of life, far from being passive, one is called to function as a body of Christ – that is, as a new creation. Yet, the ambivalence of this approach calls for the more balanced understandings emphasized by other scholars.

### 3. Peripheral Understandings of Paul’s New Creation

#### A. Putting Anthropological and Cosmological Perspectives Together

An increasing numbers of scholars endeavor to avoid the sharp distinction between the anthropological and cosmological points of view. According to their insights, Paul’s new creation is not something that can be divided clearly by either one of the two perspectives. For instance, Hans Dieter Betz, in his historical commentary on Galatians, chooses neither an anthropological nor a cosmological perspective. He perceives the complexity of Paul’s view of *καινή κτίσις*. In order to explain the new

creation, he uses terms like “soteriology, existence, and anthropology” and maintains that the phrase *καινή κτίσις* not only “sums up Paul’s soteriology, as far as it is related to Christian existence” but also “interprets Paul’s anthropology.”<sup>46</sup> He further explicates, “Through the Christ-event the Christian is enabled to participate in the new human existence ‘in Christ’ . . . .”<sup>47</sup> Up to this point, Betz seems to be inclined to adopt an anthropological perspective.

Betz, however, suddenly switches his tone: “It is significant that Paul does not use the terminology of ‘recreation’ or ‘rebirth,’ which is often found in this religious context. In fact, for him the ‘new creation’ amounts to a replacement of the old world.”<sup>48</sup> According to Betz’ elucidation, the new creation not only causes an existential change in the believer, but also shifts the fundamental structure of the world by establishing a new world in the midst of the old one.

Philip E. Hughes understands that the new creation carries both human and cosmic implications. “The redeeming work of Christ is effective not only in the experience of the believers but also throughout the whole order of God’s creation: the consummation of all things is not merely a renewed humanity, but new heavens and a new earth, a renewed cosmos.”<sup>49</sup> Frank G. Carver, in a similar line of thought, conceives that Paul’s new creation carries “both individual and corporate connotations.” By admitting the broader impact of the Christ event, he explains that individual

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<sup>46</sup> Hans Dieter Betz, *Galatians* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 319.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 320.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> Philip E. Hughes, *Paul’s Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1962), 204.

transformation foreshadows the change of cosmic order: “The Christ event has created a *new* situation, a new creation. A *new* order of humanity has come into being, bringing with it a *new* kind of person, God’s future kind of people. Paul stresses the renewal of individuals that prefigures the renewal of the cosmos.”<sup>50</sup> In Carver’s view, the radical changes of people and of the cosmos are associated like a chain.

T. Ryan Jackson illustrates the convoluted characteristic of the new creation. According to him, Paul’s new creation should not be understood from *either* an anthropological perspective *or* a cosmological one, because it has both dimensions. He critiques Mell for approaching the new creation from a pre-determined cosmological angle and, at the same time, attacks Hubbard for applying anthropological lens exclusively to the reading of *καινή κτίσις*. He regards the conflicting relations between cosmological and anthropological approaches as a “false dichotomy.”<sup>51</sup> Jackson tries to describe side-by-side the anthropological and the cosmological elements in Paul’s concept of the new creation because he believes that “Paul’s *καινή κτίσις* serves as theological shorthand for a soteriology based on the efficacy of the Christ event which has anthropological as well as cosmological implications.”<sup>52</sup> By stressing the soteriological aspect of the new creation, Jackson endeavors to solve the binary opposition between the anthropological and the cosmological viewpoints.

Those scholars who want to comprehend *καινή κτίσις* as an inclusive concept think that a sharp distinction between the anthropological and cosmological positions is

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<sup>50</sup> Frank G. Carver, *2 Corinthians: A Commentary in the Wesleyan Tradition* (New Beacon Bible Commentary; Kansas City, MO.: Beacon Hill Press, 2009), 191. Emphasis is original.

<sup>51</sup> T. Ryan Jackson, *New Creation in Paul’s Letters: A Study of the Historical and Social Setting of a Pauline Concept* (Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 4.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 173.

not persuasive enough because the anthropological approach neglects what the cosmological approach perceives and *vice versa*. The focus on attacking each position instead of appreciating the contribution that each position makes can result in dynamics of conflict that could be counterproductive for the comprehension of the meaning of *καινή κτίσις*. According to these scholars, the two perspectives are not mutually exclusive but interwoven, because in *καινή κτίσις*, human beings and other created things are coexistent instead of exclusive.

## B. New Community

As another alternative, some scholars pay special attention to the corporate character of Paul's concept of *καινή κτίσις*, while they basically accept the anthropological features of it. Yet their anthropological approach to *καινή κτίσις* is not limited to the individual but encompasses the believing community. Albert J. D. Aymer, who elucidates the continuity and discontinuity between the old and new creation in terms of the believers' existential reality, argues that the new creation is connected to "believing community." According to him, the new creation refers not to an individual but to the community: "the new creation motif...infers community and not just individuals." In his interpretation, *τις* in 2 Cor 5:17 does not simply refer to an individual but to the community of believers: "the 'anyone in Christ' implies the Christian community and the addressees of the Galatians letter are none other than the Christian community in Galatia." His emphasis on the believing community comes from his firm belief that "the new creation is not an individual experience of salvation but *a*

*participation by believers* in the future eschatological age already made possible through the death and resurrection of Christ.”<sup>53</sup>

Although Simon J. Kistemaker relates the new creation to conversion, he believes that the new creation is not limited to the inner renewal of an individual but extended to “the total environment of this individual... That is, *when people become part of the body of Christ* at conversion, their lives take a complete reversal.”<sup>54</sup> Wolfgang Kraus emphasizes the importance of community in understanding *καινή κτίσις*. He thinks that Paul’s corporate idea of the new creation has been influenced by Isaiah 66:18-23 where people from the nations will participate in an eschatological worship before God. He argues that “*καινή κτίσις* designates the ‘eschatological basis of new humanity,’ that has already begun in the community.”<sup>55</sup> Scot McKnight also emphasizes the believing community, in other words, the people of God: “what mattered was that God had formed a new people, the church, and that this new people was an entirely ‘new creation.’”<sup>56</sup> For those scholars the new creation is not something limited within an individual but refers to the community of believers who are participating in God’s new order established by Christ.

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<sup>53</sup> Aymer, *Paul’s Understanding of ‘KAINĒ KTISIS,’* 181. Emphasis added.

<sup>54</sup> Simon J. Kistemaker, *Exposition of the Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1997), 192-93. Emphasis added.

<sup>55</sup> Wolfgang Kraus, *Das Volk Gottes: Zur Grundlegung der Ekklesiologie bei Paulus* (Tübingen, Germany: J. C. B. Mohr, 1996), 251.

<sup>56</sup> Scott McKnight, *Galatians* (The NIV Application Commentary; Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995), 302.

### C. Eschatological Tension

Herbert Joel Hoover does not approach Paul's new creation from the standpoint of anthropological, cosmological, or communal perspectives. Hoover basically believes that Paul's idea of the new creation reflects an eschatological tension caused by the coexistence of the old and new age. He understands the new creation from the viewpoint of the conflicting "already" but "not yet" in Paul's eschatology. According to Hoover, Paul, who belongs to the new age, proclaims the coming of a new cosmic order in the midst of the present world. Hoover also hopes to examine Paul's new creation against the polemical environments of Paul's letters where Paul develops his arguments against the opponents. Paul's opponents who return to the old age find their boast in the flesh and the old covenants. Paul and many believers, on the contrary, obtain their new identity in the new world that the Christ event has brought in. In Hoover's understanding, Paul's new creation reflects the tension between the Spirit and the flesh, and between the new and the old in Paul's polemical struggles against his opponents.<sup>57</sup>

### D. Christ as Prototype of the New Creation

Richard B. Hays who follows Nils Dahl's insights<sup>58</sup> suggests that Christ is a prototype of the new creation: "Christ is portrayed here not only as a representative figure but as the prototype of God's new creation."<sup>59</sup> Hays hears an "echo" from the Old

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<sup>57</sup> Herbert Joel Hoover, "The Concept of New Creation in the Letters of Paul" (Ph. D. diss., The University of Iowa, 1979).

<sup>58</sup> Dahl believes that in Gal 3:26-29 Paul "interprets baptism with reference to Gen. 1:27; Christ, as the image of God, is the prototype of redeemed mankind." Nils Alstrup Dahl, *Studies in Paul: Theology for the Early Christian Mission* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1977), 133.

<sup>59</sup> Richard B. Hays, *The Faith of Jesus Christ: The Narrative Substructure of Galatians 3:1-4:11* (2d ed.; Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2002), 204.

Testament in Paul's theology by examining Pauline texts.<sup>60</sup> He believes that Paul's vision for *καινή κτίσις* should be understood with Isaiah 65:17-25 as background and argues: "this vision of God's new creation is fundamental to Paul's theology; he proclaims not just the salvation of souls, but also God's eschatological redemption of the creation."<sup>61</sup> Hays does not choose a particular position in terms of adopting either the anthropological or the cosmological viewpoint. His concern is to understand the impact of the Christ event on Paul's thought: "the Christ-story challenges Paul's self-understanding by confronting him continually with the event of the cross which, as Paul saw, is radically subversive of human expectations and judgments." Hays also mentions the power of Christ that changes Paul's understanding of the world: "it is clear that Paul sees in this story not only an overthrowing of the old order but also the establishing of a new one, a 'new creation.'"<sup>62</sup> Hays's Christocentric understanding of Paul leads him to understand Christ as the prototype of the new creation, that is, of the new humanity.<sup>63</sup>

#### E. Emphasizing Social Function

Edward Adams pays attention to the "social function" that Paul's concept of the new creation plays in Paul's letters. He basically adopts Mell's argument that the new creation refers to "the new or transformed creation expected to follow the destruction or

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<sup>60</sup> See Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1989).

<sup>61</sup> Richard B. Hays, *The Letter to the Galatians* (NIB XI; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000), 345.

<sup>62</sup> Hays, *The Faith of Jesus Christ*, 222.

<sup>63</sup> Hays, *The Faith of Jesus Christ*, 204.



renewal of the world.”<sup>64</sup> His main concern about Paul’s new creation, however, is not to find the meaning of the concept, whether it is the anthropological or the cosmological notion, but to figure out the role of the term in the polemic situations implied by Paul’s letters.

Through his investigation of Galatians, Adams juxtaposes the term κόσμος and καινή κτίσις as contrasting concepts and argues that they have social functions in the letter. According to him, the antithesis of the cosmos and new creation “serves to underline the social and religious distinction between the Jewish community and the Galatian churches.”<sup>65</sup> He emphasizes that, while the Galatian believing community itself is not the new creation, “the church *belongs* to the new creation.”<sup>66</sup> In Adams’ opinion, the members of the Galatians churches who belong to the new creation should develop their own social identity and their own uniqueness from Judaism. That is the social function that the new creation plays in the letter. In my judgment, despite Adams’ insight regarding the social function of the two dichotomic concepts, the cosmos and new creation, his arguments seem to identify the Jewish community with the cosmos, which is dying away, and the Galatian churches with the new creation. It seems more likely that, by mentioning the cosmos here, Paul does not refer to the Jewish community specifically but to the imperial system of the society in general where ethnic, social, and religious differences were critical.

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<sup>64</sup> Adams, *Constructing the World*, 226.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 228.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*

## F. Roman Empire as Social Setting

Jackson's approach to Paul's concept of the new creation is conventional and inventive at the same time. His way of investigating Paul's new creation is very traditional in terms of surveying its backgrounds in the Hebrew Bible texts, particularly the book of Isaiah and Jewish writings like *Jubilees* and Dead Sea Scrolls. With the findings from his own examination, Jackson approaches the new creation passages by analyzing their literary settings in order to infer the meaning of *καινή κτίσις*. In this respect, he simply follows the steps of investigation that many scholars before him already utilized. His creativity lies, however, in his research about the "imperial gospel" that the Roman Empire promoted. In that gospel, the emperor was praised as a redeemer and the revitalization of the capital of the Empire, Rome, is regarded as an embodiment of the new world order:

The peace procured by the empire was said to have renewed creation. Crops were more fertile, livestock more productive and fears of destruction of the world by the dissolution of the state were laid to rest. This was explained in terms of a change of ages in which a new and golden age was inaugurated. The new age was to be a time of utopian ideal. It was to be the climactic age of history when no greater time could be imagined. The embodiment of the new age was in the establishment of the Roman world order. This world order offered by Rome was constructed around the personality of the emperor and the city of Rome. The society it engendered was to be eternal and the emperor was heralded as a savior, the Lord of the whole cosmos, guarantor of peace, concord and prosperity. Space and time were reordered to express this ideology.<sup>67</sup>

Jackson is right in arguing that Paul's new creation should be understood not only from the perspective of its eschatological Jewish background that had a significant influence on Paul's theology but also from the socio-political circumstances of the Roman society

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<sup>67</sup> Jackson, *New Creation in Paul's Letters*, 79.

in which Paul communicated with his audiences.<sup>68</sup> Jackson's attempt to juggle the Jewish background of the new creation and Paul's innovative use of it in the context of the Roman Empire seems effective.

### Summary and Evaluation

Some scholars have contributed to the understanding of Paul's phrase *καινή κτίσις* by proposing several plausible options such as a new community, an eschatological tension, etc. The strong point of these minor voices is that they help readers of Pauline letters realize the depth of meaning potential that Paul's new creation carries. They have paid attention to previously ignored possible connotations of the term by approaching it from a fresh perspective. Jackson's insight on the Roman society as a social setting for interpreting Paul's new creation is particularly helpful because it opens the possibility for scholars to take into account the socio-political function of the term in a the broader society of the Roman Empire. The weak point of these "peripheral" perspectives is that only a small number of scholars have supported them. Their voices remain marginal despite their potential for enriching the studies of Paul's new creation.

### Conclusion

I have introduced various understandings of Paul's new creation and provided some evaluations of them. It has been generally believed that the anthropological and cosmological approaches have been the two most popular options among scholars seeking to elucidate Paul's new creation. Although supported by a small number of

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 183.

scholars, the peripheral options have made constructive contributions to the study of the new creation by highlighting neglected connotations and suggesting how Roman society functioned as the social setting in which Paul uses the term in communicating with the believers of the early churches. Despite their differences, these studies show certain common elements, such as the orders of examination and their way of treating the new creation as an “abstract concept.”

Scholars often start by exploring the texts from the Old Testament and Jewish apocalyptic writings such as Jubilees and the Dead Sea Scrolls and then the new creation texts, Galatian 6:15 and 2 Corinthians 5:17. According to them, the images of a new heaven and new earth from the concluding part of the book of Isaiah and the apocalyptic implication from the second temple Jewish writings have influenced Paul and his idea of the new creation. For all of them, therefore, it is necessary to examine those writings in order to understand the “proper” meaning of the term, *καινή κτίσις*, because many scholars consider Paul’s new creation as a “concept.”

Because many scholars regard *καινή κτίσις* as an abstract concept, their main focus is how to find the “true” meaning of the new creation: “What does the concept of Paul’s new creation refer to?” “Does it indicate a new cosmic order or an inner renewal?” At the end of his book, for instance, Jackson clarifies the intention of his research: “This thesis has sought to explore the concept of the new creation in the letters of Paul in a way that maintains the inherent balance between the anthropological and cosmological elements in his theology.”<sup>69</sup> The critics often assume that the new creation, as a conceptual notion, became a term through historical development. In order to understand

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<sup>69</sup> Jackson, *New Creation in Paul’s Letters*, 173.

the concept of a new creation, therefore, an interpreter should know the track of the growth of the term, which is clearly shown in Mell's *traditionsgeschichtliche* method. As mentioned earlier, two thirds of Mell's book focus on the investigation of a history-of-traditions for the term, *καινή κτίσις*. Scholars have treated *καινή κτίσις* as a concept whose background must be traced to understand it appropriately. Their primary attention, therefore, has been given not to the concrete embodiments of the new creation but to its connotations, except a few scholars who pay attention to the function of Paul's new creation.<sup>70</sup>

Despite positive contributions to the understanding of Paul's new creation, these scholars' studies are not directly helpful to Korean immigrants who have come to the United States with an "American dream," but who were then confused and disappointed by the harsh realities of their immigrant lives due to issues such as racism, language barrier, cultural unfamiliarity, and legal discrimination. The studies of these scholars also have limitation in terms of providing few tangible examples that the Korean immigrant churches can follow to overcome the various challenges that they are facing.

In my reading of Pauline texts, I hope to examine how Paul has attempted to embody God's new creation through his mission and ministry. My special attention will be given to the concrete impact of Paul's view of the new creation on his understanding of the power dynamic inside and outside of Galatian churches, his own reading of the inherited texts, and finally the establishment and role of the early believing community, the *ekklēsia*, as God's new and alternative community, through which Paul envisions God's new world in the midst of the Roman empire.

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<sup>70</sup> See the case of Hoover and Adams above.

By doing so, I will clarify the life context with which I read Pauline texts. I find it essential to keep in mind that every reader has a certain life context or particular perspective, which affects the act of interpreting the text. It is hard to find, however, someone who openly admits his/her own context or viewpoint. Very few publicly admit how his/her choice of particular literary work shapes his/her reading of Paul's letters. For instance, as discussed above, although Hubbard's selection of *Joseph and Aseneth* instead of *Jubilees* has significantly affected the results of his examination of Pauline passages, he does not acknowledge the impact of his own choice for his understanding of Paul's new creation.

It is necessary for scholars, therefore, to admit their dependence on a specific source or perspective that shapes their way of reading Pauline texts. Adopting a certain viewpoint means to emphasize particular aspects of Paul's new creation by ignoring others. That is the limitation that each interpreter should be aware of. As a result, they should not assume that their own reading is "the only right interpretation" of Paul's new creation and must admit their indebtedness to other scholars' efforts for their understanding of Paul's theology. I will attempt to clarify the strong and weak points of my reading by admitting my concrete context that influences my reading of Pauline passages.

## CHAPTER TWO

### METHODOLOGY: INTER(CON)TEXTUAL DIALOGUE

In the previous chapter, I have presented various interpretations of Paul's new creation and evaluations of them. I hope to present, in this chapter, my own methodology: inter(cont)textual dialogue. In order to explain my methodology, I want to describe the production of meaning in literary studies by elucidating two different approaches to the construction of "meaning" by juxtaposing the "author-oriented" and "text-centered" reading with the "reader-centered" reading. I also hope to clarify new challenges in the field of biblical studies that have shifted the direction of the field into a new era where the context of the reader plays an important role in finding new "meaning potentials."

#### 1. Production of Meaning in Literary Studies

"What is meaning?" and "How meaning can be produced?" have been important questions for many critics in literary studies in general. Different groups of critics have suggested various understandings of meaning by emphasizing one element over the other: the author's intention through studying the author's life and times, the text itself and its linguistic system, the reader and the reader's response, and the reading communities.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Anthony C. Thiselton, *New Horizons in Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992), 515.

## A. Author-Oriented and Text-Centered Reading

Some critics have emphasized the intention of the author as the original meaning that the text conveys. According to this “traditional author-oriented view,” the author has an absolute authority in terms of determining the “true meaning” of the text. The author’s intended initial meaning is embedded in the text, which should be “excavated” by the reader. In this viewpoint, the reading process is like a treasure hunt where the reader (hunter) should find the hidden meaning (treasure) by deciphering the given map (text). The task of the reader therefore is to figure out what the author wanted to say through the writing. In order to understand the author’s intention, critics need to examine the author’s personal experience, intellectual life, and socio-historical circumstance, which can shape the author’s writing aim. In an extreme case, critics explore “the text’s biographical-historical context *instead* of examining the text.”<sup>2</sup> In this perspective, the original meaning is something that can be “delivered” from a sender (author) to a receiver (reader) by a medium (text and proper method).<sup>3</sup> The author takes a central position in the production of textual meaning. The reader, on the other hand, plays a very limited role in the reading process by passively receiving “the true” meaning or even “consuming” the author’s intention.

“Traditional author-oriented” critics believe that in order to understand the original meaning, which is “univocal,” the reader should employ “scientific” and “interest-free” reading techniques. The reader is required to leave her own prejudices and

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<sup>2</sup> Lois Tyson, *Critical Theory Today: A User-Friendly Guide* (2d ed.; New York & London: Routledge, 2006), 136. Emphasis original.

<sup>3</sup> See Daniel Chandler, *The Act of Writing: A Media Theory Approach* (Wales, UK: The University of Wales, 1995), 4-7.



interests behind and bring herself into the same socio-historical location and perspective of the author to achieve an “objective interpretation.”<sup>4</sup> If the reader finds the “objective” original meaning of the text, it can be applied to all readers regardless of their age, gender, race, social class, and culture etc. In short, according to the “traditional author-oriented” perspective, the author’s intention, which is the “true” meaning, is hidden in the text and the reader who adopts “objective” and “scientific” reading skills should dig it out for the universal usage for all readers.

A group of critics began to shift their focus from the author’s intention to “the text itself.” They formed the so-called “New Criticism” movement in the United States, which has been a dominant position in literary studies from the 1940s to 1960s. They have emphasized the central role of the text. They believed that the determined meaning is entirely embedded in the text. Therefore, the reader should examine the literary context and “formal elements” of the text in order to understand the meaning of it. These critics argued that the author’s intention is not always available and often hard to determine. As Lois Tyson explains, “Sometimes a literary text doesn’t live up to the author’s intention.” The text itself can be more meaningful and richer than the author recognizes and the meaning of it can be “different from the meaning the author wanted it to have.”<sup>5</sup> The central position that the author used to have is now given to the text itself. The autonomy of the text becomes an important issue in terms of appreciating the meaning of the text. In short, according to New Criticism, textual meaning comes not from what the author intended but from what the formal elements of the text creates in its literary

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<sup>4</sup> Kevin J. Vanhoozer, “The Reader In New Testament Interpretation,” in *Hearing The New Testament: Strategies for Interpretation* (ed. J. B. Green; Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1995), 305.

<sup>5</sup> Tyson, *Critical Theory Today*, 136.

circumstances. Therefore the “objective” and “best” meaning should be determined by examining the literary context of the text as a whole.

Although there is a major difference between the traditional author-oriented approach and text-centered New Criticism in terms of how they address questions—for example, “Which determines the ‘true’ meaning of the text, the intention of the author or the combination of formal elements of the text?” There are several similarities between them. First, both positions argue that the determinate meaning is imbedded in the text, which needs to be “discovered” by the reader. Second, the “true” meaning is “objective” and “universal,” and can be excavated by using “value-neutral” reading techniques. Third, the meaning can be applicable to all readers regardless of their unique situations. Fourth, the role of the reader in the production of meaning is rarely recognized. The reader often remains silently on the very margin of the reading process. For some critics, the passivity of the reader in the author-oriented and text-centered understandings is problematic. As a result, they have proposed a new model in which the reader takes an active role in the act of reading.

## B. Reader-Centered Reading

Reader-centered approach is a reaction to the traditional emphasis on the author and the text as the main determiner of textual meaning. Several critics have raised a question: “If there is no reader, how can the meaning of the text be recognized and appreciated?” They have realized that the reader is an essential part of the reading process, because if there is no reader, the reading cannot be “reading” anymore. The act of reading inevitably requires the reader. This realization leads these critics to think about the role of the

reader: “What is the role of the reader for the production of meaning?” They come to understand that the reader is the one who makes the meaning of the text “meaningful.”

The reader is not a passive consumer of the “true” meaning that the author’s “original intention” and/or the text conveys but an active participant of the reading process where she creates new meaning out of the text. The reader’s various situations such as personal experience, socio-economic situation, geopolitical location, and specific interest lead him to focus on a particular portion of the text. This “interested” focus often contributes to the discovery of a new meaning for the text that has not been recognized by others. As a result, some critics argue that various literary approaches have entered into “the era of the reader.”<sup>6</sup>

Reader-response criticism particularly emphasizes the active role of the reader. Critics who advocate this criticism believe that meaning is not “something ready-made, buried in the text, just waiting to be uncovered. Rather it is something produced in the act of reading through the unique interaction of the text and the particular reader doing the reading, at a particular moment, from a particular slant.”<sup>7</sup> Reader-response criticism is not “a conceptually unified criticism” but “a spectrum of positions.” It is connected to “the work of critics who use the words *reader*, *the reading process*, and *response* to mark

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<sup>6</sup> Vincent B. Leith, *American Literary Criticism: from the Thirties to the Eighties* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 211 and The Bible and Culture Collective, *The Postmodern Bible* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995), 26. Barthes argues for the removal and death of author. His critiques of “Classic criticism” emphasizes that it “has never paid any attention to the reader” and argues that “the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the Author.” Roland Barthes, “The Death of the Author,” in *Image, Music, Text* (trans. S. Heath; New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), 142-48.

<sup>7</sup> Robert M. Fowler, “Reader-Response Criticism: Figuring Mark’s Reader” in *Mark & Method: New Approaches in Biblical Studies* (2d ed., ed. Janice C. Anderson and Stephen D. Moore; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008), 60.

out an area for investigation.”<sup>8</sup> It is a clear challenge to the conventional understanding of the authoritative author, the static text, and the passive reader.

According to Jane P. Tomkins, reader-response criticism is a direct opposition to New Criticism’s idea of “the Affective Fallacy,” which has emphasized the distinction between the literary work and its psychological and social effects. “Reader-response critics,” as Tomkins explains, “would argue that a poem cannot be understood apart from its results...meaning has no effective existence outside of its realization in the mind of reader.”<sup>9</sup> Reader-response criticism’s focus on the active role of the reader in meaning-creation gained more critics’ attention during the late 1960s and 1980s<sup>10</sup> when New Criticism was losing its dominant position rapidly in the field of literary studies.

How to draw a boundary line for reader-response criticism has been an issue for many critics. Some attempt to see other criticisms such as feminist, postcolonial, deconstructive, and cultural criticism as “first cousins” of it.<sup>11</sup> Others try to categorize various understandings of it into several groups.<sup>12</sup> The authors of *The Postmodern Bible*

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<sup>8</sup> Jane P. Tomkins, Introduction to *Reader-Response Criticism: From Formalism to Post-Structuralism*, (ed. J. P. Tompkins; Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), ix.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Vincent B. Leith, *American Literary Criticism: from the Thirties to the Eighties* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 212.

<sup>11</sup> Robert M. Fowler, “Reader-Response Criticism,” 61. Tyson also argues that psychoanalytic, feminist, structuralist, and queer criticism are various forms of reader-response criticism. Tyson, *Critical Theory Today*, 169-170.

<sup>12</sup> Vanhoozer categorizes reader-response criticism into two groups: Conservative “reader-respect” understanding and radical “reader-resistance.” He puts Wolfgang Iser and Paul Ricoeur on the conservative side and Roland Barthes and Stanley Fish on the radical. Vanhoozer, “The Reader In New Testament Interpretation,” 308-12; See also Susan R. Suleiman and Inge Crosman’s classification of “six varieties of audience-oriented criticism,” *The Reader in the Text: Essays on Audience and Interpretation* (Princeton: Princeton University, 1980), 6-7; Tyson, *Critical Theory Today*, 173-187; and Edgar V. McKnight, “Reader-Response Criticism” in *Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation* (ed. John Hayes; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1999), 370-73.

explain that reader-response criticism can be grouped into three different clusters: “psychological or subjective cluster”; “interactive or phenomenological cluster”; and “social or structural cluster.” They introduces three theoretical questions that help critics classify different positions of it: 1) “Is reading primarily an individual or social experience?” 2) “Which dominates the reading experience, the text or the reader?” 3) “Is ‘the reader’ an expert reader or an ordinary reader?” According to their explanation, the “psychological or subjective cluster” mainly pays attention to individual readers who are usually not experts. In this model, the reader takes a dominant position in the reading experience. The “interactive or phenomenological cluster” tries to maintain a balance between the text and the reader to prevent one of them from dominating the reading process. In this understanding, reading is often the business of an individual expert rather than a communal act of ordinary readers. For “social or structural cluster” reading is mainly communal and is exercised through individual experts who belong to different interpretive communities.<sup>13</sup>

One of the first critics who have developed reader-response criticism is Wolfgang Iser. He believes that reading is not a one-way process but a “a dynamic *interaction* between text and reader.”<sup>14</sup> He explains that the text has gaps, something that is missing and not explained in detail. “What is not said” in the text stimulates the reader’s imaginative activity. The reader needs to fill in the blanks with her imagination and to bridge the gaps in order to understand the text. The filling in of the gaps by readers is the beginning of the dynamic interaction from which meaning of the text can be actualized.

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<sup>13</sup> The Bible and Culture Collective, *The Postmodern Bible*, 27.

<sup>14</sup> Wolfgang Iser, *The Act of Reading* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), 107. Emphasis original.

However, Iser emphasizes that the reader's use of imagination should be limited by the text. According to him, the inherent structures and the blanks of the text guide the reader's imaginative action and prevent it from being arbitrary. "What is concealed spurs the reader into action, but his action is also controlled by what is revealed."<sup>15</sup> For Iser, even though the reader participates in the reading process actively by "bring[ing] his own faculties into play," the text maintains its relatively central position in terms of inducing the reader's reaction in the act of reading.

The primary position that the text takes in Iser's understanding becomes explicit, when he explains what meaning is: "Meaning is the referential totality which is implied by the aspects contained in the text and which must be assembled in the course of reading." He argues that this meaning gains "its full significance when something *happens* to the reader."<sup>16</sup> He further emphasizes the transformative impact of the meaning on the reader. He believes that the importance of the literary work does not lie in "the meaning sealed within the text" but lie in "the fact that that meaning brings out what had previously been sealed within" the reader.<sup>17</sup> For Iser, meaning of the text comes from a dynamic interaction between the text and the reader. This interaction is guided by the structures of the text and processed by the reader. The act of reading ultimately transforms the reader into a new self with new consciousness.

Paul Ricoeur shares with Iser the emphasis on the interaction between text and reader. In his understanding, reading is a dialectic between the text and the reader;

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 169.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 151-52. Emphasis original.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 157.

specifically, between the world of text and the world of reader. “Meeting between text and reader,” as Ricoeur explains, “is a meeting between the whole of the text’s claims, the horizon which it opens onto, the possibilities which it displays, and another horizon, the reader’s horizon of expectation.”<sup>18</sup> Because of this dialectic between the two worlds, there are multiple interpretations.

Important terms for Ricoeur’s understanding of interpretation are “distanciation” and “appropriation.” For him, interpretation is “a dynamic dialectic between the distanciation of the text and the appropriation by the reader.” Distanciation refers to “the semantic autonomy of the text” and appropriation to the reader’s effort to make one’s own what is alien to him.<sup>19</sup> Through reading, the reader seeks to relate to the world that the text presents. To interpret, according to Ricoeur, is not to find “the presumed intention of the author” but to “appropriate *here and now* the intention of the text.” For Ricoeur, the meaning of the text comes from the dialectic process between the text’s distanciation and the reader’s sense-making appropriation. In his model, nevertheless, the text takes relatively primary position in meaning-production in terms of guiding the reading process.

If Iser and Ricoeur emphasize the interaction between the text and the reader, David Bleich focuses on the reader’s subjective response to the text. Bleich thinks that meaning is not in the literary text but in the reader’s response that happens during the act of reading. In his understanding, the reader plays a comparatively central role in the act

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<sup>18</sup> Paul Ricoeur, “World of the Text, World of the Reader,” in *A Ricoeur Reader: Reflection and Imagination* (ed. M. J. Valdés; New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991), 492.

<sup>19</sup> About Ricoeur’s “distanciation” and “appropriation,” see Ricoeur, “Appropriation,” in *A Ricoeur Reader*, 87-90.

of reading by responding to the text subjectively. According to him, a reading of the printed material often evokes the reader's feelings, memories, and imaginations. The reader reacts to the printed words subjectively, creating a "conceptual world" in her mind. This is the process of "symbolization." "Symbolization occurs in the perception and identification of experiences." This symbolization creates in the reader "a need, desire, or demand for explanation." The action to explain what is created in the reader's mind is "resymbolization."<sup>20</sup>

For pedagogical purpose, Bleich asks his students to write "response statements," which reflect their personal and emotional responses to the text that they read.<sup>21</sup> Then he requests them to share and discuss the statements. Those processes of sharing and discussing often produce communal interpretation and "shared knowledge." According to him, "interpretation is an explanatory activity...[and] a resymbolization motivated by the demand that the knowledge thus symbolized be explained, or converted into a more subjectively satisfying form."<sup>22</sup> Therefore, from the perspective of subjective criticism, literary meaning is not something that can be discovered in the text but what can be "recreated" by the reader's subjective responses.

Through his arguments on interpretation and meaning, Bleich develops the idea of interpretive community that produces "subjective" knowledge. In Bleich's understanding, this interpretive community is often created through the process of negotiating the communal interpretation of the text, which is different from Stanley Fish's concept of

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<sup>20</sup> David Bleich, *Subjective Criticism* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), 39.

<sup>21</sup> Bleich shows two examples of response statements, *Ibid.*, 215-17 and 219-22.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 213.



interpretive community, which exists before the communal interpretation and formulates an individual reader's perspective that makes the negotiation process possible.

What is commonly called the "later Fish's position" on the understanding of meaning-creation ranges from Iser's interaction to Bleich's subjectivity. Like many reader-response critics, Stanley Fish advances the idea of meaning-construction on the basis of a critique of New Criticism: "if meaning is embedded in the text, the reader's responsibilities are limited to the job of getting it out." He further explains, "if meaning develops, and if it develops in a dynamic relationship with the reader's expectations, projections, conclusions, judgments, and assumptions, these activities (the things the reader *does*) are not merely instrumental, or mechanical, but essential, and the act of description must both begin and end with them." For him, reading is not "an entity" but "an event" where an interaction between the text and the growing response of the reader can be observed. In terms of admitting an interaction between the text and the reader for the production of meaning, Fish shares a common ground with Iser and Ricoeur.

Fish's main concern however proceeds from the interaction between the text and the reader to the central role of the reader's response: "the reader's response is not *to* the meaning; it *is* the meaning, or at least the medium in which what I wanted to call the meaning comes into being."<sup>23</sup> For Fish, the reader's temporal reading experience is intimately related to the meaning that the reader recognize. In this perspective, Fish's understanding of textual meaning is much closer to Bleich's subjectivity than Iser's dynamic interaction.

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<sup>23</sup> Stanley E. Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class? The Authority of Interpretive Communities* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980), 3.

Fish's focus on the active role of the reader's experience has developed into the notion of "interpretive communities." According to him, interpretive communities play a ultimate role for meaning creation: "it is interpretive communities, rather than either the text or the reader, that produce meanings and are responsible for the emergence of formal features."<sup>24</sup> According to him, the reader is "a product of that community" and she brings particular purposes and goals of the community into her reading. That is why different readers from various communities often disagree on the meaning of a certain text: they approach it with distinctive perspectives shaped by their own interpretive communities. As a result, there is "no single way of reading that is correct or natural."<sup>25</sup> For Fish, every reading is "interested" and also communal.

As mentioned earlier, if reader-response criticism was "a spectrum of contrasting and conflicting positions," the various models of Iser, Ricoeur, Bleich, and Fish that we have observed would be showcases of it. Among the many contributions that Reader-response criticism had made for literary studies, several need to be explained here. First, Reader-response criticism contributes to the "rediscovery" of the reader that "entails a genuine paradigm shift in literary studies."<sup>26</sup> It correctly emphasizes the active, and eventually central, role of the reader in the act of reading, especially her function for the production of meaning. As Robert M. Fowler explains, instead of asking "*What* determines the meaning of a text?" reader-response critics prefer to ask, "*Who* determines

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>26</sup> Stephen D. Moore, *Literary Criticism and the Gospels: The Theoretical Challenge* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1989), 72.

the meaning?” The instant answer is “the reader.”<sup>27</sup> Reader-response criticism does not simply re-discovers the reader but places the reader at the central position in meaning creation. Second, Reader-response criticism assists the reader to be more self-conscious of what she does as she reads and of how she responds to her reading experience. This self-awareness leads her to assume responsibility for what her reading and response does to others. Third, as Edgar V. McKnight correctly argues, Reader-response criticism allows the reader “to interact with the text in light of [his] own context.”<sup>28</sup> It frees the reader to bring concerns originating from his own life context into his reading of the text.

However, Reader-response criticism also shows several limitations. First, even though it emphasizes the primary role of the reader as one who determines meaning of the text, it does not raise a critical question, “Who is the reader?” If the reader’s perspective, personal and communal concerns, and sociopolitical interest function as critical elements for meaning production, those elements should be examined closely and the meaning that the reader produces should be evaluated critically. Second, as Vincent B. Leith indicates, by focusing primarily on “small communities of students and professors,”<sup>29</sup> Reader-response criticism refrains from analyzing the larger society and culture that influence those small communities. Therefore, those who want to use reader-response criticism should be aware of those weaknesses and should try to overcome them.

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<sup>27</sup> Fowler, “Reader-Response Criticism,” 60. Emphasis original.

<sup>28</sup> Edgar V. McKnight, “Reader-Response Criticism,” in *To Each Its Own Meaning: An Introduction to Biblical Criticisms and Their Application* (ed. S. L. McKenzie and S. R. Haynes; Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993), 207.

<sup>29</sup> Leith, *American Literary Criticism*, 237.

## 2. Production of Meaning in Biblical Studies

### A. New Voices: Challenges for Change

Throughout the history Christianity, believers have interpreted the Bible in a myriad of ways.<sup>30</sup> In the field of biblical studies, historical-critical criticism has maintained the dominant position since the nineteenth century, especially in Europe and North America. Like the “traditional author-oriented view” in general literary criticism, historical-critical scholars assume that determinate meaning is embedded in the biblical text, which conveys the author’s intention. The task of the reader, therefore, is to find out the “original meaning” by using “scientific and value-neutral” interpretative techniques by exploring the world behind the text. In order to use “scientific” reading methods, the reader should gain “professional” training, usually under an authoritative “master teacher.” In this aspect, the reader should not be an “ordinary” reader but a skilled critic.

The original meaning of the text that the trained and “disinterested” critic discovers through “disinterested” reading strategy is believed to be “objective” and “universal.” Therefore it can be applied to all readers regardless of their age, gender, sexual orientation, social class, or racial/ethnic and cultural backgrounds, etc. In this perspective, any textual meaning that the “untrained” reader produces must be regarded as “suspicious” and any attempt to bring the reader’s specific concerns into his reading should be devaluated because it is an “interested” reading.

However, various challenges to the traditional historical-critical method have come from within the discipline. Half a century ago, Rudolf Bultmann, although he remains

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<sup>30</sup> Robert M. Grant with David Tracy, *A Short History of the Interpretation of the Bible* (2d ed.; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005).

within the category of the traditional historical-critical criticism,<sup>31</sup> argued for the existence of presuppositions in every interpretation: “*every interpreter brings with him certain conceptions, perhaps idealistic or psychological, as presuppositions of his exegesis.*”<sup>32</sup> The reader obtains these pre-conceptions from his life. He also believes that every reader has “a relation to the subject-matter,” which he calls “life-relation,” which plays a critical role in exegesis. “This is,” Bultmann argues, “the basic presupposition for every form of exegesis: that your own relation to the subject-matter prompts the question you bring to the text and elicits the answers you obtain from the text.”<sup>33</sup> As a result, for Bultmann there is “no exegesis is without presuppositions.”<sup>34</sup>

According to Bultmann, because of different presuppositions and interests that the reader brings into her reading, any given interpretation of a biblical text cannot be final. Therefore, the meaning of a biblical text should be viewed as remaining open.<sup>35</sup> Bultmann’s idea of the reader’s carrying specific questions into the reading of biblical texts and their impact on the answers that she gains from the interpretation open a new possibility for multiple readings of the same biblical text.

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<sup>31</sup> Bultmann argues, “Certainly the Bible is an historical document and we must interpret the Bible by the methods of historical research.” Rudolf Bultmann, *Jesus Christ and Mythology* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1958), 51-52.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 48. Emphasis is original.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 50-51.

<sup>34</sup> Rudolf Bultmann, *Existence and Faith* (trans. S. M. Ogden; Cleveland and New York: World Publishing Company, 1960), 294. Gadamer believes that prejudices are essential elements for understanding. He argues, “The overcoming of all prejudices, this global demand of the Enlightenment, will itself prove to be a prejudice, and removing it opens the way to an appropriate understanding of the finitude which dominates not only our humanity but also our historical consciousness.” Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (2d ed., trans. J. Weinsheimer and D. G. Marshall; New York: Continuum, 2000), 306.

<sup>35</sup> Bultmann, *Existence and Faith*, 295.

Roughly from the third quarter of the twentieth century, the “silenced voices” such as feminists, ethnic minorities in Western World, scholars from the so-called “Third World,” and the previously colonized have challenged the dominant position of historical-critical criticism, which has been “androcentric and Eurocentric.”<sup>36</sup> These silenced voices not only confront the traditional biblical scholarship, demanding change, but also bring their unique perspectives and experiences into their interpretations of biblical texts. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, from her perspective as a feminist biblical critic, criticizes the traditional Western biblical scholarship, and its claims of “objective scientism and theoretical value-neutrality.” She argues:

This scientific ethos of value-free detached inquiry insists that the biblical critic needs to stand outside the common circumstances of collective life and stresses the alien character of biblical materials. What makes biblical interpretation possible is radical detachment and emotional, intellectual, and political distancing. Disinterested and dispassionate scholarship enables biblical critics to enter the minds and world of historical people, to step out of their own time, and to study history on its own terms, unencumbered by contemporary questions, values, and interests. Apolitical detachment, objective literalism, and scientific value-neutrality are the rhetorical postures that seem to be dominant in the positivistic paradigm of biblical scholarship.<sup>37</sup>

Schüssler Fiorenza’s critique originated in her observation that the traditional Western scholarship denied its “political” orientation/influence and its “public responsibility.” The observation leads her to raise several questions: “Whose interests are served?” “What roles, duties, and values are advocated?” “Which social-political practices are legitimated?” She argues that in order to achieve “a paradigm shift” in biblical scholarship, a critic should explain explicitly “one’s rhetorical strategies, interested

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<sup>36</sup> Daniel Patte, *Ethics of Biblical Interpretation: A Reevaluation* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995), 25.

<sup>37</sup> Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Rhetoric and Ethic: The Politics of Biblical Studies* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), 24.

perspectives, ethical criteria, theoretical frameworks, religious presuppositions, and sociopolitical locations.”<sup>38</sup> The critic should admit that his interpretation is “interested” and “biased.” As a result, it is not the only true understanding of a biblical text. The critic should have an open mind to the plurality of textual meaning and be humble enough to learn from other’s different interpretations.

The emergence of the “silenced voices” not only challenges the “calcified” historical-critical criticism, but also revitalizes biblical studies itself with fresh insights. The “silenced voices” has become “new voices” for a constructive shift in the discipline.

According to Fernando Segovia’s investigation, competing interpretive “paradigms or umbrella models of interpretation,” such as “literary criticism,” “cultural criticism,” and “cultural studies” have changed the discipline. “Different readers,” Segovia explains, “see themselves not only as using different interpretive models and reading strategies but also as reading in different ways in the light of the multilevel social groupings they represent and to which they belong.”<sup>39</sup> Key characteristics of the “new voices” in the discipline can be found in Segovia’s elucidation of “cultural studies.”

First, the reader does not take a passive position in the production of meaning anymore by just consuming it. The reader is also not something created through a literary imagination like an “implied author.”<sup>40</sup> The reader is “the flesh-and-blood reader.” This reader is “always positioned and interested; socially and historically conditioned and

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<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>39</sup> Fernando F. Segovia, *Decolonizing Biblical Studies: A View from the Margins* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2000), 32.

<sup>40</sup> Leitch introduces different “readers” that various approaches have created such as “informed readers, ideal readers, implied readers, actual readers, virtual readers, superreaders, and ‘literents.’” Leitch, *American Literary Criticism*. 212.

unable to transcend such conditions...not only with respect to socioeconomic class but also with regard to the many other factors that make up human identity.”<sup>41</sup> The “conditioned” reader plays a critical role in the production of meaning by bringing personal and communal interests, concerns, and experiences into her reading of biblical texts. Second, “the meaning of the biblical text” is neither something embedded in the text for “excavation” nor what the author intended the text to convey. It is something produced through the encounter “between a socially and historically conditioned text and a socially and historically conditioned reader.” In this perspective, the text is not “an autonomous and unchanging object” but “something that is always read and interpreted by real readers.”<sup>42</sup> Third, the meaning of the text cannot be applied to all readers regardless of their times and cultures, because it is not “objective” or “univocal,” but “interested” and “limited.” This limitedness of an interpretation requires the reader to be open-minded enough to learn from different understandings of others in distinctive social locations. Fourth, the trained critic cannot claim his authoritative position over other “ordinary” readers anymore because he is “no less positioned and interested than any other reader.”<sup>43</sup> He brings a particular perspective and concerns into reading as other readers do. His interpretation is not “objective” or “value-neutral” but conditioned and prejudiced. The hierarchical privilege that the professional critic once enjoyed over the readers is not valid anymore. Fifth, a careful analysis of the reader’s social location and agenda is required. The reader’s interests and concerns often determine the reading

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<sup>41</sup> Segovia, *Decolonizing Biblical Studies*, 30.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 42-43.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.



strategy that he employs and are immediately related to his representation of the ancient texts and reconstruction of the ancient world. Therefore analysis of the subject of reading is necessary and critical.

Those characteristics of “new voices” make them very distinctive from the voices of traditional historical-critical criticism and enable them to be effective in terms of embracing and responding to the new challenges that rapidly changing societies bring to biblical studies. Thus, speaking of “the meaning of a text” is itself misleading; one needs to speak of a plurality of meanings for any given text.

#### B. New Meaning through Different Contexts of the Reader

“New voices” of biblical interpretation often notice the importance of the reader’s context for new meaning of the text. Schüssler Fiorenza clearly argues, “a critical theory of rhetoric insists that context is as important as text. What we see depends on where we stand. One’s social location or rhetorical context is decisive for how one sees the world, constructs reality, or interprets biblical texts.”<sup>44</sup> In a similar line of thought, Brian Blount emphasizes the role of the reader’s context for recognizing “meaning potential.” In his book, *Cultural Interpretation: Reorienting New Testament Criticism*, Blount employs M. A. K. Halliday’s sociolinguistic understanding and Enrique Dussel’s sociological model for his reading strategy. He elucidates several problems of different approaches in biblical studies focusing on “traditional Eurocentric scholarship” and “liberation approach.” According to his analysis, the Eurocentric traditional scholars insist that the meaning of biblical text should be gained from historical-critical examination of

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<sup>44</sup> Schüssler Fiorenza, *Rhetoric and Ethic*, 19.

“grammatical-textual and conceptual-ideational issues in the material.” They devalue any contemplation of “interpersonal interaction between the text and the sociopolitical circumstance of the reader” as “reading information *into* the text rather than mining information *from* it.”<sup>45</sup>

Some liberation scholars, on the other hand, tend to focus on the “interpersonal interaction” between the text and the reader and ignore “grammatical-textual and conceptual-ideational issues.” As a result, “the text becomes a mirror that reflects the interpreter’s own sociopolitical concerns.”<sup>46</sup> In order to overcome these two “radical” approaches, Blount proposes a sociolinguistic reading model.

He argues that the text does not deliver a fixed single meaning but has “meaning potential.” That meaning potential provides the reader an opportunity to choose among the meaning possibilities that the text conveys. The reader chooses one possibility over another because of his specific life context. “Sociolinguistics therefore suggests,” according to Blount, “that the social context of the reader determines which potential meaning is most appropriate. Therefore it should not be overly surprising that people from different sociolinguistic backgrounds might interpret the same texts radically different ways.”<sup>47</sup> In a way, Blount’s sociolinguistic understanding shares a common ground with Reader-response criticism; both emphasize the active/central role of the reader in meaning-production. However, Blount pays more attention to the sociopolitical context of the reader rather than to the reader herself.

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<sup>45</sup> Brian K. Blount, *Cultural Interpretation: Reorienting New Testament Studies* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 7.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, Emphasis original.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

Blount furthermore describes the weakness that a “naïve” sociolinguistic approach may have. His keen sensibility to his own sociopolitical context as a member of an ethnic minority community--the African American church--in a racist society leads him to point out the power dynamics that exists in arguments for “correct” interpretation. He argues that readers from the dominant social groups commonly privilege their sociolinguistic perspectives over those of the marginalized. By privileging the interpretive viewpoint of the dominant and devaluating that of the marginal, so-called “scientific” interpretation of the text becomes “ideological.” He believes that “[t]he interpretation of language determines not only understanding, but political and scientific control.”<sup>48</sup> Therefore his project is to challenge the “entire program of ideological biblical interpretation” by presenting new meaning potentials of the biblical text through the perspective of the marginal members of society.<sup>49</sup>

Blount, in his later books,<sup>50</sup> clarifies in detail the role of the context for meaning-creation. He argues that language should be assessed contextually because “language is itself a contextual medium.” He explains that language is created “out of and for social circumstance.”<sup>51</sup> He believes that meaning comes from a dialectical encounter between the text and the reader who approaches it within a specific context. “Words...do not convey meaning: they convey meaning potential. That potential...becomes *meaningful*

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>50</sup> I have in mind Blount’s three books *Go Preach!: Mark’s Kingdom Message and the Black Church Today* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1998); *Then the Whisper Put on Flesh: New Testament Ethics in an African American Context* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2001); and *Can I Get a Witness? Reading Revelation through African American Culture* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005).

<sup>51</sup> Blount, *Go Preach!*, 35.

only when it is performed and accessed in a certain context.”<sup>52</sup> For him, context is one of the most important keys for interpretation, because it often shapes the questions that the reader brings to her reading of the text and guides the answers that she elicits from it, as Bultmann argues.

Even though Blount adopts new terms and different “windows” through which he reads the New Testament texts,<sup>53</sup> his main “cultural context” remains unchanged: the socio-religious and geopolitical situations of the Black church and the experiences of African Americans in the United States. He believes that the unique perspectives of African Americans and their communities assist him to access to a new meaning potential of the biblical text that has not been recognized by other readers from different socio-cultural contexts.

Brad Braxton is also one of the biblical scholars who take the African American experience seriously to find “new meanings” in the biblical text for contemporary believers. His focus is on the communal reading of the African American church as an “interpretive community.” He employs Stanley Fish’s notion of “interpretive communities” and emphasizes the active role of reading community for biblical interpretation. He believes that “the plurality of textual meaning” comes from various reading communities’ rigorous engagement with texts with their own life experiences. According to him, “all readers are members of interpretive communities.” As a result, the reader who has been influenced by his own community’s values, norms, and goals will

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<sup>52</sup> Blount, *Can I Get a Witness?*, 2. Emphasis original.

<sup>53</sup> Blount utilizes “the enslaved African American religious experience” as a window for his understanding of “the ethical perspective of the New Testament materials” in *Then the Whisper Put on Flesh*. However, he employs “cultural studies” as a reading strategy for his reading of Revelation and the term, “context” is somewhat substituted by “cultural location” in his latter book, *Can I Get a Witness?*

bring in “pre-understandings” of the community to the reading of biblical texts, which becomes “foundational for the *creation of meaning*.” Therefore, the authority “to create and adjudicate over meaning rests with the interpretive community.”<sup>54</sup>

Braxton as a preacher rightly raises a question about the possible tension between the authority of the interpretive community and that of the Bible. He explains that the authority of the Bible is closely related to the divine inspiration. This inspiration is twofold: God is not only “involved” when the Bible was written by the early believers and canonized by believing communities, but also “involves” when it is read by contemporary Christian communities and meditated on by Christians today. He believes that the word of God is “a dynamic process, even event that occurs when communities read the text through the lens of Christ in the light of current needs.” Therefore, God’s inspiration, which is believed as the authority of the Bible, should be determined by usefulness in meeting the needs of believing communities “in the here and the now.”<sup>55</sup>

The uniqueness of Braxton’s argument is to emphasize the active role of the Holy Spirit in understanding the word of God. He argues that “the Holy Spirit speaks to, through, and sometimes contrary to the experiences of the community as the community reads the text.” He proposes a three-dimensional interaction among the Holy Spirit, the Scriptures, and the experiences of the believing community—an interaction through which God’s word for current believers can be mediated or created.<sup>56</sup> Braxton’s emphasis

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<sup>54</sup> Brad Braxton, *No Longer Slaves: Galatians and African American Experience* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2002), 28-31.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 36-37. Emphasis original.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

on the three-dimensional interaction is closely related to the “three interpretive dimensions” of scriptural criticism.

According to scriptural criticism proposed by Cristina Grenholm and Daniel Patte, three interpretive dimensions are interwoven in the process of biblical interpretation: Analyzing the biblical texts (analytical); pondering upon the life situations of community (contextual); and identifying individual and collective perceptions of religious experience (hermeneutical/theological). Grenholm and Patte argue that all interpretations are the results of these three interpretive dimensions, regardless of whether readers are aware of that interactive process or not.<sup>57</sup> From the viewpoint of scriptural criticism, various interpretations of the Bible can be “plausible” by making hermeneutical sense and “legitimate” by being properly grounded in one aspect of biblical text(s). However, even though an interpretation of a biblical text is plausible and legitimate, its “validity” needs to be assessed for each and all particular life contexts. A plausible and legitimate interpretation could be “harmful” for particular people in a specific life situation. In fact, some interpretations brought death rather than life, oppressing certain groups of people and spreading or condoning injustice.<sup>58</sup>

Patte is one of the scholars who put emphasis on the ethical responsibilities of biblical scholars. He accuses male European-American critical exegetes as “androcentric” and “Eurocentric” who have contributed to the oppression and injustice because of their failure to assume ethical responsibility for their interpretations. According to Patte, the

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<sup>57</sup> Cristina Grenholm and Daniel Patte, “Overture: Reception, Critical Interpretations, and Scriptural Criticism,” in *Reading Israel in Romans. Legitimacy and Plausibility of Divergent Interpretations* (ed. Cristina Grenholm and Daniel Patte; vol. 1 of *Romans Through History and Cultures Series*, Harrisburg, PA: Trinity International Press, 2000), 12-21.

<sup>58</sup> Neil Elliott, *Liberating Paul: The Justice of God and the Politics of the Apostle* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1994), 3-24.

male European-American critical exegetes often have become “sexist, racist, classist, colonialist,” despite their good intentions, because they have believed that they are the only ones who can find “the single true meaning of the text.” By so doing, they often exclude any other interpretation that is not conformed into their own way of reading by designating it “illegitimate.” They place their interpretations on the top of a hierarchical system and devalue other approaches like feminist, African-American, and “Third-world” readings.<sup>59</sup>

Patte describes the “interested character” of the interpretive methods that the male European-American critical exegetes have employed. According to his description, the reading tools, which they believe as “objective,” “scientific,” and “disinterested,” not only embody the preunderstandings of particular groups but also serve specific interests and concerns of members of those group.<sup>60</sup> In this aspect, all readings are interested and therefore “ideological.”<sup>61</sup> He argues that the male European-American critical exegetes should admit that their interpretation is not universal but interested and, as a result, very limited and partial. That is why they should listen to other interpretations that “ordinary” readers produce. Patte believes that ordinary readers can reveal various “legitimate readings” that critical exegetes “would have never perceived without their help.”<sup>62</sup> That is another reason that critical exegetes should admit “the legitimacy of ordinary readings.”

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<sup>59</sup> Patte, *Ethics of Biblical Interpretation*, 17-30.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 49-59.

<sup>61</sup> Vanhoozer also correctly elucidates the ideological characteristic of reading: “There is no innocent reading; rather, all reading is interested, and to the extent that these are vested interests, all reading is ideological. Our choice of interpretive aim is ultimately a political decision.” Vanhoozer, “The Reader In New Testament Interpretation,” 308.

<sup>62</sup> Patte, *Ethics of Biblical Interpretation*, 106.

Patte as a male European-American proposes an “androcritical multidimensional” interpretation. This approach emphasizes that because a reader can understand only a part of multidimensional meanings of a text,<sup>63</sup> he should acknowledge the legitimacy of very different understandings of other readers who bring in their particular interests and concerns to their readings as he does. Androcritical interpretation admits that various readings are equally legitimate whether they are professional critics or ordinary readers.<sup>64</sup> What is required for all readers is acknowledging the context through which they interpret the text and keeping open minds to listen to each other’s readings with respect and appreciation.

In his later books, Patte’s emphasis on the legitimacy of ordinary readings has been developed into the idea of “reading with others.” His focus on the importance of context for meaning-creation has been also developed into a “contextual interpretation,” which emphasizes the “textual, contextual, and theological choice” that all readers make when they read the Bible as Scriptures in a specific life situation.<sup>65</sup>

The significance of specific context for new meaning potentials of biblical texts is also recognized even within the traditional Western European scholarship. Walter Dietrich and Ulrich Luz admit the “abstractness” of Western biblical scholarship. It suffers, according to their analysis, from the lack of particular contexts. It is conducted

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<sup>63</sup> J. Severino Croatto also clarifies the multiplicity of readings: “The plurality of readings suggested by semiotic practice is not due to the ambiguity of a text, but to its capacity to say many things at once.” J. Severino Croatto, *Biblical Hermeneutics: Toward a Theory of Reading as the Production of Meaning* (trans. R. R. Barr; Orbis Books, Maryknoll, NY, 1984), 21.

<sup>64</sup> Patte, *Ethics of Biblical Interpretation*, 114-125.

<sup>65</sup> See Daniel Patte, *The Challenge of Discipleship: A Critical Study of the Sermon on the Mount as Scripture* (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania: Trinity Press International, 1999), 10-22 and Daniel Patte, Monya A. Stubbs, Justin Ukpong, and Revelation E. Velunta. *The Gospel of Matthew: A Contextual Introduction for Group Study* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2003), 7-42.



with no real concerns of people in the present world, but with problems of “an imaginary text world” that scholars create. It consequently has produced “abstract results and truths.” They argue that Western biblical scholarship is not conscious of the fact that “interpretation of all texts, biblical or other, always happens in both contexts: the past and the present.” Therefore contextual interpretation is what is most needed in Western biblical scholarship.<sup>66</sup>

The contextual approach, which emphasizes the important role of particular life contexts and social locations that give readers distinctive perspectives and concerns, has gained intensive attention not only from biblical interpretation,<sup>67</sup> but also from other fields of theology.<sup>68</sup> It allows the reader to bring personal and communal concerns or questions to her reading of biblical texts, which can produce “concrete” insights and possible answers.

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<sup>66</sup> Walter Dietrich & Ulrich Luz, Preface to *The Bible in a World Context: An Experiment in Contextual Hermeneutics* (ed. W. Dietrich & U. Luz: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2002), ix-x.

<sup>67</sup> One of the early books that pay attention to the reader’s context and social location for “new meaning” would be *Voices from the Margin: Interpreting the Bible in the Third World* (ed. R. S. Sugirtharajah; Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991). Later, two volumes of *Reading from this place* (ed. F. F. Segovia and M. A. Tolbert; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995) has become a significant contribution to the development of “contextual/cultural” biblical interpretation. Recently *Global Bible Commentary* (ed. D. Patte; Nashville: Abingdon Press: 2004) and *From Every People and Nation: The Book of Revelation in Intercultural Perspective* (ed. D. Rhoads; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005) shows good examples of contextual interpretation.

<sup>68</sup> For example, Homileticians utilize a contextual approach and develop “contextual preaching.” See John S. McClure, “contextual preaching,” in *Preaching Words: 144 Key Terms in Homiletics* (Louisville and London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007), 17. Allen presents “the church,” “the larger world,” and “the life of the preacher” as three main contexts for preaching. Ronald J. Allen, *Interpreting the Gospel: An Introduction to Preaching* (St. Louis, Missouri: Chalice Press, 1998), 19-62. Actually Grenholm and Patte develop their Scripture criticism by observing “conscientious” preachers’ sermon preparation who read the Scripture by considering life contexts and religious experience of their congregations. See Grenholm and Patte, “Overture,” 12-14.

### 3. Inter(con)textual Dialogue

Several contexts formulate my unique perspective and interest for reading of biblical texts. One of them is my Koreanness as a part of broader Asian traditions. In her book, *Discovering the Bible in the Non-Biblical World*, Kwok Pui-lan, a leading Asian postcolonial feminist theologian, proposes “dialogical imagination” as a new way of biblical interpretation, which is the result of her close observation of other Asian theologians. She regards Asian Christians as “heirs to both the biblical story and to our own story as Asian people.” The challenge that they face, as a result, is to bring the “biblical stories” and “Asian stories” into a creative dialogue. According to her, dialogical imagination, “involves ongoing conversation among different religious and cultural traditions...[and] attempts to bridge the gaps of time and space, to create new horizons, and to connect the disparate elements of our lives into a meaningful whole.” She suggests that there can be mainly two ways for dialogical imagination: One is to use “Asian myths, legends, and stories” to re-imagine biblical stories and the other is to use “the social biography of the people as a hermeneutical key to understand both our reality and the message of the Bible.”<sup>69</sup>

Kwok Pui-lan’s idea for a creative dialogue between biblical stories and the stories from Asian cultures and peoples is a helpful suggestion for Asian believers’ creative reading of biblical texts. However, as Kwok Pui-lan admits later, the subject who performs “dialogical imagination” should be critically examined and the diversities and

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<sup>69</sup> Kwok Pui-lan, *Discovering the Bible in the Non-Biblical World* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1995), 12-13.

fluidities of Asian cultures should be carefully considered.<sup>70</sup> Clearly, there is no single “Asian culture” but multiple “Asian cultures.” When someone talks about “Korean culture,” people from different gender, regions, socio-economic classes, and ages may have various images of what Korean culture is, even though they live in the same Korean Peninsula. Furthermore, for Korean immigrants and Korean Americans who are in continuous transition from one social location to another in American society, “Korean culture” is not homogeneous; it is complex and multi-layered. Therefore, if someone wants to use the term, “Korean culture,” she needs to provide specific circumstances and conditions through which she defines it.

I want to propose “inter(con)textual dialogue” as a hermeneutical and methodological approach for my reading of Pauline texts. I borrow the term “inter(con)textual” from Tat-siong Benny Liew,<sup>71</sup> who is one of the first scholars to use it.<sup>72</sup> He argues that a literary text is not just a language in print but refers to “a network of cultural, economic, and socio-political strands or factors that engulfs each and every

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<sup>70</sup> Kwok Pui-lan admits that her “dialogical imagination” needs to consider “more explicit discussion of its theoretical grounding and a deepened engagement with postcolonial theories and cultural studies.” Especially taking “the fluidity and contingent character of Asian cultures” into account, she proposes another interpretive method, “diasporic imagination,” which not only resists “a predetermined and prescribed universalism and a colonial mode of thinking,” but also “recognizes the diversity of diasporas and honors the different histories and memories.” Kwok Pui-lan, *Postcolonial Imagination & Feminist Theology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 38-51.

<sup>71</sup> Benny Liew uses the term, “intercontextual” by putting “con” in a parenthesis, “inter(con)textual.” He explains, “‘(Con)text’ reminds us visually that we are dealing with more than literary texts, and that literary texts are products of socio-political forces. At the same time, the parenthesis signifies that so-called ‘contexts’ are always already textualized and constructed, and that literary texts also have power to produce non-literary effects.” Tat-siong Benny Liew, *Politics of Parousia: Reading Mark inter(con)textually* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 1999), 33.

<sup>72</sup> Jean Kyung Kim also uses the term, “intercontextual.” She believes that Benny Liew’s inter(con)textual approach has been influenced by Nicholas Zurbrugg’s idea of “intertextual impasse” and explains that she is using the term “in order to emphasize the importance of a context in biblical interpretation.” See Jean Kyung Kim, *Women and Nation: An Intercontextual Reading of the Gospel of John from a Postcolonial Feminist Perspective* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2004), 54-55, n. 68.

phenomenon.” For him, “a so-called ‘context’ is also a text” because it is always “textualized” by sign systems. Therefore, the clear distinction between the text and the context becomes blurry in his understanding.<sup>73</sup> He explains his reading as “inter(con)textual dialogue” in terms of emphasizing “a dialogical relationship between Mark’s (con)text and [his] own personal (con)text.”<sup>74</sup>

I believe that various contexts of the reader such as socio-economic, geopolitical, and cultural situations have significant impacts on her interpretation of the biblical text. At the same time, the interpretation will transform her by causing her to respond positively or negatively. If reading is an encounter between the reader and the text through which new meaning potential can be realized, this encounter should be “genuine dialogue.” What I mean by “inter(con)textual” is a way of approaching two different (con)texts—a current situation and that of a biblical narrative—by reading one (con)text through the insights of the other and vice versa. Therefore, inter(con)textual dialogue is an attempt to create a genuine conversation between the two different (con)texts.

## Conclusion

I have presented various understandings of meaning production not only in literary studies, but also in the field of biblical studies. I have elucidated the dynamics among the author, text, and reader and clarified that every reader has a particular life

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<sup>73</sup> Benny Liew, *Politics of Parousia*, 25-27. Benny Liew’s idea of the blurry distinction between ‘text’ and ‘context’ is somewhat related to post-structuralists’ understanding of between the text and the meaning. Eagleton argues that there is no obvious distinction between signifiers and signifieds: “If you want to know the meaning (or signified) of a signifier, you can look it up in the dictionary; but all you will find will be yet more signifiers...signifiers keep transforming into signifieds and vice versa, and you will never arrive at a final signified which is not a signifier in itself.” Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), 128.

<sup>74</sup> Benny Liew, *Politics of Parousia*, 40.

context and perspective, which make big difference in one's reading of biblical texts. I have proposed an "inter(con)textual dialogue" as my reading strategy for interpreting Pauline texts. I therefore, as a reader and believer who belongs to a Korean immigrant church in Los Angeles California, hope to analyze the situations of Korean immigrants and their churches in the United States. With the insights from my analysis, I want to approach Pauline passages, particularly the circumstances of the Galatian churches. At the same time, I hope to read the realities of Korean churches and Korean immigrants in America with insights from my reading of Paul's texts, specifically of his letter to the Galatians. I do not provide Korean immigrant believers' responses to Pauline texts but present my readings of the situations of Korean immigrants in America and my interpretations of Pauline passages. By doing so, I attempt to create a genuine dialogue between the (con)texts of the Galatian churches and those of the Korean immigrant churches.

## CHAPTER THREE

### LIFE CONTEXT FOR READING: THE SITUATIONS OF KOREAN IMMIGRANTS IN THE UNITED STATES

In the previous chapter, I have proposed “inter(con)textual dialogue” as my methodology for interpreting Pauline texts and explained that I hope to approach them with the insights from my analysis of the situations of Korean immigrants and their churches in the United States. I will use the situations of Korean immigrants in the United States as my life context for interpreting Paul’s new creation with specific focus on the 1992 Los Angeles riots. I will fully investigate the 1992 Los Angeles riots not only because it is the most influential event that happened to Koreans in America, but also because it dramatically shows the real conditions of Korean immigrants in American society. My analyses of the Korean immigrant society and the riots will function as dialogue partners for my inter(con)textual reading of Galatians.

#### 1. Brief History of Early Korean Immigrants

The official diplomatic relationship between Korea and the United States began by the signing of “The Treaty of Amity and Commerce”<sup>1</sup> on May 22, 1882. Although the

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<sup>1</sup> The treaty, which has been called “The Chemulpo Treaty,” describes the possibility for Koreans to live in the United States without big difficulties: “Subjects of Choson (Korea) who may visit the United States shall be permitted to reside and to rent premises, purchase land, or to construct residences or warehouses, in all parts of the country. They shall be freely permitted to pursue their various callings and avocations, and traffic in all merchandise, raw and manufactured, that is not declared contraband by law.” However, it also shows an “unequal” power relationship between the two countries by clearly stating, “citizens of the United States, either on shore or in any merchant’s vessel, who may insult, trouble, or wound persons, or injure the property of the people of Choson, shall be arrested and punished only by the Consul or other public

first Korean diplomatic mission led by *Young-ik Min* arrived in San Francisco on September 2, 1883 and the first Korean Embassy was established in Washington D.C. in January 1888, only a handful of Koreans, mostly students, political exiles, and Ginseng merchants, visited the United States before 1903.<sup>2</sup> Most of them temporarily stayed in America and returned to Korea.

Therefore it will not be incorrect to say that an “authentic” immigration of Koreans to the United States started with a group of Koreans who arrived in Honolulu on January 13, 1903.<sup>3</sup> According to scholars, the Korean immigrant history could be divided into three major periods. The first immigration wave (1903-1905) started with predominantly male laborers who were brought to the Hawaiian Islands in order to work on the sugar plantations. Their “picture brides”<sup>4</sup> followed them (1910-1924). The majority of the second wave (1951-1964) was mainly young women who got married to American servicemen who participated in the Korean War (1950-1953) and wives of American G.I.’s and “war orphans” who were adopted by American families.<sup>5</sup> A

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functionaries of the United States.” Bong-youn Choy, *Koreans in America* (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1979), 46-47.

<sup>2</sup> Warren Y. Kim, *Koreans in America* (Seoul: Po Chin Chai, 1971), 3-4.

<sup>3</sup> Scholars generally agree that an “official” beginning of the Korean immigration history in the United States started on January 13, 1903. However, according to Hyung-chan Kim and Wayne Patterson’s investigation, there were some Koreans who already came to Honolulu before January 13, 1903. Less than fifty Koreans were living in the United States before the “official” immigration. For detail, See Hyung-chan Kim and Wayne Patterson, eds., *The Koreans in America 1882-1974: A Chronology & Fact Book* (Dobbs Ferry, New York: Ocean Publications, 1974), 2-3.

<sup>4</sup> The picture-brides were young Korean women who mainly arrived at Hawaii to get married to Korean bachelors in sugar plantations mostly from 1910 to 1924. Detail explanation will be given in following sections.

<sup>5</sup> It has been estimated that about 6,423 Korean wives of American servicemen entered the United States from 1951 to 1964 and about 6,293 Korean orphans were adopted by American couples between 1955 and 1966. The wives of American G.I.’s are “the least studied group” among Koreans in America because of “their unique demographic characteristics of interracial marriage, wider age gap between spouses, and separation into often isolated residential areas alienate them from both Korean immigrant communities and

relatively large number of students and professionals joined them.<sup>6</sup> The third wave (1965-present) was the time for a massive influx of Korean immigrants, which established the current Korean immigrant society in the United States.

For the purpose of this chapter, I will focus on the first and third immigration waves because the first immigrants were pioneers who had set the foundation for Korean immigration in America and a majority of current immigrants are those who came to America during the third period. My examination of the two waves of Korean immigration will enable us to see the unique characteristics of Korean immigrants in America before I focus next on the 1992 Los Angeles riots.

#### A. First Immigration Wave

On December 22, 1902, a group of Koreans boarded the merchant ship, *S. S. Gaelic* for Hawaii as the first “genuine” Korean immigrants to the United States. The ship departed from *Chemulpo* (current, *Inchon*), Korea and stopped at *Kobe*, Japan for physical examination<sup>7</sup> of them. Twenty of them failed the examination. Therefore only the remaining 101 Koreans composed of 55 men, 21 women, and 25 children, headed for Hawaii and arrived in Honolulu on January 13, 1903.<sup>8</sup> They opened the first page of the

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the host communities.” Jung Ha Kim, *Bridge-makers and Cross-bearers: Korean-America Women and the Church* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997), 5.

<sup>6</sup> According to Moon H. Jo, more than 27,000 non-immigrants were permitted between 1951 and 1964 and many of them were students. Moon H. Jo, *Korean Immigrants and the Challenge of Adjustment* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1999), 11.

<sup>7</sup> The physical examination of Korean immigrants was conducted by Japanese physicians in Japan because of the lack of modern medical facilities in Korea.

<sup>8</sup> Choy argues that 8 out of the first 101 Koreans were prohibited from landing because their eyes found to be infected. Therefore, the exact number of the first Korean immigrants was 93. See Choy, *Koreans in America*, 75. However, scholars usually accept and use “101” as the number of the first Korean immigrants to the United States.



Korean immigration history in America. After a few days of rest, they were sent to the Waialua Plantation on the Island of Oahu. After this historic migration, on March 3, 56 Koreans via *Coptic* and on March 19, 72 via *Korea* arrived in Honolulu.<sup>9</sup> About 7,226 Koreans composed of 6,048 male, 637 female, and 541 children moved to the Hawaiian Islands via sixty-five different ships by 1905.<sup>10</sup>

However, the first wave of Korean migration into the United States was suddenly stopped by an order given by the Korean government on the 4<sup>th</sup> of April, 1905, because of misfortune that affected some nine hundred Koreans brought to Mexico.<sup>11</sup> However this temporary suspension became permanent when “The Korea-Japan Protectorate Treaty” was signed on November 17, 1905. This treaty enabled the Japanese protectorate in Korea to be formalized so that Japanese government began to control Korean’s foreign affairs and domestic policies.

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<sup>9</sup> Kim and Patterson, *The Koreans in America 1882-1974*, 3.

<sup>10</sup> Ilpyong J. Kim, “A century of Korean Immigration to the United States: 1903-2003,” in *Korean-Americans: Past, Present, and Future* (ed. Ilpyong J. Kim; Elizabeth, NJ: Hollym International Corp., 2004), 13-37.

<sup>11</sup> According to Won Moo Hurh and Kwang Chung Kim’s research, in 1905, 1,031 Koreans were “illegally recruited by a British merchant named John G. Meyers of the Continental Settlement Company and were sent to Merida, Yucatan, to work under a four-year labor contract without the Korean government’s authorization.” Won Moo Hurh and Kwang Chung Kim, *Korean Immigrants in America: A Structural Analysis of Ethnic Confinement and Adhesive Adaptation* (London and Toronto: Associated University Presses, 1984), 40. David W. Deshler provides more informed reason for stopping the Korean immigration to the United States in his letter to Huntington Wilson who was in charge of American Legation, *Tokyo*, Japan in 1906. According to Deshler, the Korean foreign minister, *Yi Ha Yung* said that “the reason for the stopping of the emigration was the fact that there had recently come to Korea a new irresponsible company, who, by promise of high wages and other advantages, had induced some nine hundred Koreans to take passage on a vessel especially chartered to convey them to Mexico; that the management of this new company did not meet with their approval, that they had misrepresented his views and opinions in the matter of the Korean migration to Mexico, and that he did not consider Mexico a suitable place for Koreans to go to in any numbers; and inducing them to emigrate to undesirable places by irresponsible people, and that in order to effectually stop this undesirable work, he originally intended to prohibit the emigration of Koreans to Mexico, but that up consultation with His Excellency, the Japanese Minister to Korea, the Japanese Minister pointed out that it would be unfair to discriminate in favor of any emigration company or country, and that if one were stopped, all must stop.” David W. Deshler, “David W. Deshler’s Letter to Huntington Wilson,” in *The Koreans in America 1882-1974: A Chronology & Fact Book* (ed. Hyung-chan Kim and Wayne Patterson; Dobbs Ferry, New York: Ocean Publications, 1974), 88.

During that time, Japanese laborers in the Hawaiian Islands, who composed two thirds of all sugarcane workers, requested the Japanese government not to send more Koreans to Hawaii, because they felt threatened by the massive arrival of Korean hands. They wanted to keep the dominant position in the plantation workforce and hoped to avoid a competition with Koreans for the jobs on the sugarcane fields.<sup>12</sup>

As an indirect result of “the Gentleman’s Agreement” of 1908, in which Japan and the United States agreed to stop the immigration of Japanese laborers to America, and the Japanese government’s complete annexation of Korean peninsula in 1910, Koreans’ immigration to Hawaii was “officially” banned except for approximately 1,100 “picture-brides” and a small number of students. However, when “The Immigration Act” of 1924, which was often called “The Oriental Exclusion Law” because it prohibited even the Asian spouses of American citizens from coming into the United States,<sup>13</sup> became effective, no Koreans including “picture-brides” could enter the United States legally until 1951.

It is important to know about these first Korean immigrants and their lives in Hawaii not only because they became the cornerstones of the Korean immigration history in America, but also because the stories of the first immigrants can function as “mirrors” by which current Koreans in America reflect their lives. In order to understand the first immigrants and their lives, it will be helpful to raise several questions: 1) Who were they? 2) Why did they come to Hawaii? 3) How did they live in Hawaii?

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<sup>12</sup> Yo-jun Yun, “Early History of Korean Immigration to America,” in *The Korean Diaspora: Historical and Sociological Studies of Korean Immigration and Assimilation in North America* (ed. Hyung-chan Kim; Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-Clio, 1977), 39-40.

<sup>13</sup> Won Moo Hurh, *The Korean Americans* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1998), 34.

#### a. Identity of the First Korean Immigrants

Who were the first Korean laborers brought to the Hawaiian Islands? Scholars have been divided over the backgrounds of early Korean immigrants. A group of scholars believe that the first immigrants were largely peasants from rural areas. Bong-Youn Choy, for example, argues that “[a]s expected, farmers comprised the majority.”<sup>14</sup> Another group of scholars think that they were mainly from urban areas, like port cities. Bernice Bong Hee Kim, for instance, asserts, “Very few came from the rural districts, so that the farming class made up less than one-seventh of the entire group. The largest proportion was common laborers or coolies who worked periodically in port cities and towns.”<sup>15</sup> Jung Ha Kim, also believes that the first Korean immigrants “were semi-skilled or unskilled workers who were poorly educated urbanites from big cities and port cities of Korea.”<sup>16</sup> After a careful investigation on both arguments, Won Moo Hurh and Kwang Chung Kim comes to a conclusion that most of the first Korean immigrants were young bachelors in twenties and thirties from port cities throughout Korea. They were semi-skilled or un-skilled workers with poor education and some of them were active Christians who practiced their faith before coming to Hawaii.<sup>17</sup>

Hurh and Kim’s argument makes sense when the socio-economic and political situations of Korea in the early 1900s are considered. A nationwide drought and flood

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<sup>14</sup> Choy, *Koreans in America*, 77.

<sup>15</sup> Bernice Bong Hee Kim, “The Koreans in Hawaii,” in *The Koreans in America 1882-1974: A Chronology & Fact Book* (ed. Hyung-chan Kim and Wayne Patterson; Dobbs Ferry, New York: Ocean Publications, 1974), 110; repr. from *Social Science*, Vol. IX, No. 4 (October 1934).

<sup>16</sup> J. Kim, *Bridge-makers*, 4.

<sup>17</sup> Hurh and Kim, *Korean Immigrants in America*, 42.

brought a severe famine in 1901 and a cholera pandemic raged throughout the summer of 1902. Those natural disasters pushed the already-hungry Koreans to starvation. To make matters worse, corrupt government officers imposed heavy taxes on the famished people. Powerful nations like the United States, Japan, and Russia were fighting for control of particular areas of Korean society<sup>18</sup> and this power struggle made native businesses weaker and the life conditions of Koreans more difficult. Those who were tired from harsh living environments and the impotence of ruling elites began to seek an opportunity to escape from their ineffective feudal society.

People who were living in the relatively “open atmosphere” of the port city like *Chemulpo* had more opportunities to be exposed to foreigners; Christians missionaries were more active in big cities than in rural areas. David W. Deshler, an official recruiter hired by the Hawaiian Sugar Planters Association, established a recruiting company in *Chemulpo* with branch offices in major port cities like *Pusan*, *Chinnampo*, and *Wonsan* and began to get attentions from many Koreans with an attractive advertisement.<sup>19</sup> Therefore, it is very likely that a majority of the first Korean immigrants were young people from port cities who were exhausted by the harsh conditions of Korean society and eager to find an opportunity for a better life. They must have had a vision of a new world as they decided to take the journey to Hawaii.

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<sup>18</sup> The United States was trying to get control of communication and transportation industry; Japan began to monopolize import and export business; and Russia was interested in get timber franchise.

<sup>19</sup> The content of the advertisement was already introduced at the beginning of the Introduction.

## b. Reasons for Their Migration

What drove the first Koreans to migrate to Hawaiian Islands? As mentioned above, the harsh living environments of the early 1900s, including the corrupt system of the Korean society, should be counted as the primary factor that led many Koreans to decide to journey to American soil. Another important element to consider was the function of Christian missionaries. Indeed, missionaries played an important role in recruiting the first Korean laborers, because they believed that the Koreans would be better Christians and have better living environments in Hawaii. Early missionaries like Horace G. Underwood, Henry G. Appenzeller, and Horace N. Allen encouraged Koreans to consider migrating to Hawaii.

Missionaries' efforts to recruit Korean workers seem to have been successful. In fact, nearly half of the first 101 Koreans on the *S. S. Gaelic* were member of the *Yongdong* church in *Chemulpo* where Reverend George H. Jones<sup>20</sup> ministered.<sup>21</sup> Jones wrote letters to the superintendent of the Methodist Mission in Hawaii, the Reverend

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<sup>20</sup> George Heber Jones (1867-1919) began his missionary work in Seoul in 1887. Later he was assigned to *Chemulpo* as one of the first missionaries in that port city in 1892. His ministry among people in the city seemed successful. According to his writing, when he started his ministry in 1892, there were only three Koreans in his worship service. However, the membership had been increased rapidly: "We have long outgrown this place. We now number 150 members and probationers in the port, besides three large circuits outside with 18 outstations and 1,100 members..." George Heber Jones, "Methodist Episcopal Mission in Chemulpo," Methodist Episcopal Church Missionary Society, *Gospel in All Lands* Vol. 21 (December 1900): 529-530. Jones had particular interests in learning about Korean culture and religion. His intellectual curiosity in Korean people and society made him a "foremost scholar" on Korean studies, especially on shamanism. He "regarded shamanism as the real religion of the Korean people, but criticized its lack of strict morality." Seung-Deuk Oak, "Healing and Exorcism: Christian Encounters with Shamanism in Early Modern Korea," *Asian Ethnology* Vol. 69, No 1 (July 2010): 105. Jones was sure that Koreans would be "desirable" laborers in Hawaiian sugar plantation: "The Korean, when placed in favorable circumstances, is wonderfully quick to learn and in a marvelously short length of time, he learned his lessons and today the universal testimony is that the Korean is a very desirable plantation hand." George Heber Jones, "The Koreans in Hawaii," in *The Koreans in America 1882-1974: A Chronology & Fact Book* (ed. Hyung-chan Kim and Wayne Patterson; Dobbs Ferry, New York: Ocean Publications, 1974), 90-91; repr. from *Korean Review* VI, 11 (November 1906).

<sup>21</sup> Hurh and Kim, *Korean Immigrants in America*, 45.

John W. Wadman, and asked the leaders of the Korean immigrants to deliver those letters to Wademan. In the letters he asked Wadman to welcome and assist the Korean immigrants upon their arrival in Honolulu.<sup>22</sup> Some scholars believe that a significant numbers of first Korean immigrants were Christians and most Koreans in Hawaii gradually became affiliated with churches.<sup>23</sup>

The third factor was the Hawaiian sugar plantation owners' need for new workforce. Among various laborers like the Chinese, Japanese, Portuguese, Hawaiian, and Puerto Ricans, the Japanese formed the dominant ethnic group. However, the Japanese often went on strikes in order to get more wages and better benefits from the owners. They also frequently moved to the mainland for nicer opportunities, which created a vacuum of manpower on the plantations. As a result, the owners of sugar plantations wanted to hire new laborers with two goals in their minds: 1) to meet the labor shortage; and 2) to check the dominance of Japanese workers and their frequent strikes.<sup>24</sup> They began to consider Koreans as a new workforce at the recommendation of Horace N. Allen, an American minister to Korea and a consul general who functioned as a trusted advisor of the Korean Emperor, *Kojong*.

Allen played an important role in building a bridge between the owners of sugar plantations in Hawaii and Korean laborers in Korea. After visiting his home in March 1902, Allen had two different meetings with the leaders of the Hawaiian Sugar Planters Association in San Francisco and Honolulu respectively and discussed with them the

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<sup>22</sup> Kim and Patterson, *The Koreans in America 1882-1974*, 127.

<sup>23</sup> Choy, *Koreans in America*, 77; Hurh, *The Korean Americans*, 38.

<sup>24</sup> Choy, *Koreans in America*, 73.

possibility of bringing Korean hands to Hawaii.<sup>25</sup> Later he wrote a letter to Sanford B. Dole, the governor of the Hawaiian Islands and recommended Koreans as an ideal workforce for the plantations. In his letter to Dole, he explained the difficult situations of Korea and the characteristics of Koreans comparing them with Chinese:

The Koreans are patient, hard-working, docile race; easy to control from their long habit of obedience. They are usually very keen on getting a foreign education, and this has taken quite a number to the United States where a few have become naturalized, while those who have returned are doing well and are a credit to their American education. . . . The Koreans are a more teachable race than the Chinese; they eat more meat than do the latter people, though their chief article of diet is rice. If Koreans do get to the Islands in any number it will be a Godsend to them (Koreans) and I imagine they will be found to be unobjectionable and of good service as laborers.<sup>26</sup>

Allen asked the Korean Emperor, *Kojong*, to encourage Koreans to be laborers in Hawaii in order to reduce the government's burden of feeding the starving people. *Kojong* accepted his advice and gave permission to Dashler, a business friend of Allen, to recruit Koreans. In November 1902, the Emperor also ordered the establishment of a governmental institute, *Su Min Won*, in order to handle the emigration process like issuing a passport and later *Su Min Won* had branch offices in various port cities.<sup>27</sup>

A combination of several factors like the starving Koreans' desperate seeking for a better place to live, the active role of missionaries, and the plantation owners' need for a new workforce created an ideal environment for Koreans to migrate to the Hawaiian Islands with a dream of a new world.

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<sup>25</sup> Lee Houchins and Chang-su Houchins, "The Korean Experience in America, 1903-1924," *Pacific Historical Review* Vol. 43, No. 4 (November 1974): 550.

<sup>26</sup> Horace N. Allen, "Horace Allen's Letter to Sanford B. Dole, Governor of Hawaii," in *The Koreans in America 1882-1974*, 85-86.

<sup>27</sup> Houchins and Houchins, "The Korean Experience in America," 552.

### c. The Actual Lives of the First Korean Immigrants

How was the life of the first Korean immigrants in Hawaii? When Koreans applied for being laborers in Hawaii, many of them had a dreamlike expectation that they might land on a “paradise” where they would enjoy their lives in a warm weather without worrying about food and education for their children. However, their actual life was far from this anticipation. What was waiting for them was language barrier, cultural shock, backbreaking hard work under the blazing sun, loneliness in segregated camps, and homesickness. Each plantation had a camp set aside for Korean laborers. A family was given a small house and singles lived in big barracks with no privacy. Barracks were often separated by ethnic groups (there were Japanese, Chinese, and Korean barracks) but they usually ate all together in a big kitchen. The housing was free but they had to pay about six dollars per month for meals and an extra dollar for laundry.

They usually worked ten hours a day, six days per week. The normal workday started from six in the morning to four-thirty in the afternoon with a thirty-minute lunch break. The daily wage for men ranged from sixty-five to seventy cents and for women from fifty to sixty-five. During the harvest season, they worked seven days a week, ten hours a day. About two hundred men and fifty women from different ethnic backgrounds became one group under the supervision of a *luna*, foreman. The *luna* lined up the group with the fastest laborers at the head of each line in order to get more work done.<sup>28</sup> After the work, the tired laborers often went to bed immediately after eating dinner in order to wake up at four-thirty in the morning for another harsh day of work. The disappointed

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<sup>28</sup> Morris Pang, “A Korean Immigrant” in *The Koreans in America 1882-1974: A Chronology & Fact Book* (ed. Hyung-chan Kim and Wayne Patterson; Dobbs Ferry, New York: Ocean Publications, 1974), 119; repr. From *Social Forces in Hawaii* (XII, 1949).



Koreans began to escape from the sugar plantations. About a thousand Koreans returned to Korea and two thousand moved to mainland America, mostly to San Francisco and Los Angeles, California.<sup>29</sup>

Two social phenomena, unique to Koreans in Hawaii, need to be examined in detail in order to understand their lives on the sugar plantations: picture-brides and the central role of the Christian church. As time went on, the young bachelors who were in their twenties and thirties when they arrived became older, but could not get married because there was no available Korean ladies in Hawaii. Therefore, marriage became an important issue not only for personal happiness but also for building a healthy Korean community. During the holidays or Sundays, many bachelors spent time drinking, gambling, and gossiping, which often resulted in fighting. From the perspective of the plantation owners, it was essential to keep the laborers healthy and happy to improve the quality of work and to maintain a secure and stable workforce. For conservative Korean bachelors, interracial marriage was unthinkable. As a result, bringing brides from Korea became a practical solution.

In general, the picture-brides were young Korean women who arrived to Hawaii to get married to Korean bachelors in the sugar plantation mostly from 1910 to 1924. Their average age was seventeen. In the early days, a bachelor in Hawaii used to take his picture and sent it to family members in Korea in order to find a marriageable woman. When they found a woman who was interested in getting married to him, they would send a picture of the woman to him.<sup>30</sup> However, soon professional match-makers were

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<sup>29</sup> Houchins and Houchins, "The Korean Experience in America," 554.

<sup>30</sup> Wayne Patterson and Hyung-chan Kim, *Koreans in America* (Minneapolis: Lerner Publications, 1992), 26.

hired by marriage brokers in Honolulu to travel from village to village and to recruit young ladies who wanted to go to Hawaii and be married.

The story of Young Oak Chung who arrived in Honolulu on May 1, 1918 at the age of sixteen is very helpful because it provides detailed information about the “selecting” process and the trip to Hawaii and the brides’ lives on the sugar plantation.<sup>31</sup> In July 1917, Young Oak met a well-dressed old lady, a match-maker, at her hometown, *Ham An*, a rural village of *Kyung-Sang* province,<sup>32</sup> in the south-eastern part of Korea. When Young Oak showed an interest in being a picture-bride, the match-maker arranged for a picture to be taken of her, which was sent to the match-maker’s boss in Hawaii, with Young Oak’s name and age written on the back of the picture. About three months later, the match-maker returned to Young Oak with a picture of a forty-two-year-old bachelor, Bong Woon Chung in Hawaii. The match-maker usually received 100 dollars from a man in Hawaii for a picture bride. 50 dollars was for the “would-be” bride, 30 for commission and 20 for the picture. Young Oak finally received a letter with a 50-dollar check from Chung in November 1917. She shared her decision to get married to a man in Hawaii with her family, telling them that she did not want to continue enduring the hardships such as starvation and discrimination that women in an oppressive Confucian social system can expect to undergo. Her family appreciated her decision because they knew that she would support her poor family with the money that she had received for being a picture-bride.

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<sup>31</sup> Won Kil Yoon, *The Passage of a Picture Bride* (Loma Linda, CA: Loma Linda University Press, 1989).

<sup>32</sup> Majority numbers of picture-brides came from *Kyung-Sang* province.

After taking a private English lesson for two months with the money that her “would-be” husband sent to her, about 850 dollars, she left her family behind and headed to a port city, *Pusan*, where she boarded on a Japanese ship bound for *Yokohama*, Japan. In *Yokohama*, she was examined for eye infection and had a stool test. Finally she left for Hawaii on April 23, 1918. After nine days, the ship docked in Honolulu and she waited for three days in an immigration station. On the third day, she met Chung for the first time and confirmed that she came to the United States to get married to him in front of an immigration officer. Then, they were permitted to leave the immigration building and checked into a Korean inn. After lunch, the innkeeper suggested to them to have a wedding ceremony that night at the midweek worship service. Although they agreed to the suggestion, the couple only had eight hours to prepare their wedding service. They went to nearby shops and purchased rings and shoes for the wedding, and hurried back for the service. The wedding ceremony took place at the Honolulu Korean Methodist Church with 50 church members attending the midweek service. They enjoyed a week-long honeymoon in Honolulu and went to the plantation in Maui Island to start a new life.

The unique social phenomenon of picture-brides led to several positive impacts for Korean society in Hawaii. Even though it was costly to bring a picture-bride to Hawaii,<sup>33</sup> bachelors could start having families in a foreign land and find comfort and happiness in their households. They became more responsible workers in order to support their family.<sup>34</sup> Picture-brides also brought harmony to the Korean community. While many bachelors were from northern parts of Korea, most of the picture-brides were from

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<sup>33</sup> A bachelor usually spent three to five hundred dollars to bring a woman from Korea to Hawaii including fees, transportation fare, and wedding ceremony. See, B. Kim, “The Koreans in Hawaii,” 112.

<sup>34</sup> Jo, *Korean Immigrants*, 4.

the south. Their marriages diminished the long-time separation between Korean northerners and southerners.

In spite of these positive effects, the numbers of picture-brides was too small to meet the needs of all the bachelors in Hawaii. More picture-brides needed to come to Hawaii to solve the problem. Unfortunately “The Oriental Exclusion Law” was signed and became effective in 1924. That meant that no picture-brides could come to Hawaii any more. As a result, “about 3,000 male Korean immigrants had to spend the rest of their lives as bachelors.”<sup>35</sup> This was the harsh reality that early Korean immigrants went through.

Another distinctive social phenomenon for Korean immigrants in Hawaii is the central role of the Christian church. As mentioned above, thanks to the influence and active role of missionaries, many first Korean immigrants were already active church members in Korea. It is not hard to imagine that even many non-Christian immigrants were exposed to missionaries during the application and the actual process of departure for Hawaii.<sup>36</sup> Even though scholars differ in their estimates of numbers of active Christians among the first Korean immigrants,<sup>37</sup> they generally agree that the Korean ethnic church played a central role for Koreans in Hawaii from the earliest days of their lives in a new land.

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<sup>35</sup> Hurh and Kim, *Korean Immigrants in America*, 43.

<sup>36</sup> Won Moo Hurh and Kwang Chung Kim, “Religious Participation of Korean Immigrants in the United States,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, Vol. 29, No. 1 (March 1990), 21.

<sup>37</sup> Kim and Patterson argue that there were approximately 400 Christians, *The Koreans in America 1882-1974*, 4; Yong-ho Choe estimates the number of Christians from 400 to 2,400, Yong-ho Choe, “History of Korean Church: A Case Study of Christ United Methodist Church, 1903-2003,” in *Korean-Americans: Past, Present, and Future* (ed. I. J. Kim; Elizabeth, NJ: Hollym International Corp., 2004), 38-46; and Choy argues that about 40 percent of the first immigrants were Christians, Choy, *Koreans in America*, 77.

Christians among the first immigrants began to organize their own churches and conducted worship services soon after their arrival even before American missionaries began to work among them. The first official worship service was held at Mokuleia on the Island of Oahu on July 4<sup>th</sup>, 1903.<sup>38</sup> With the initial establishment of the Hawaii Methodist Church in November 1903,<sup>39</sup> Koreans founded twelve immigrant churches in the Hawaiian Islands between 1905 and 1914.

Choy suggests three reasons to explain why the Korean ethnic church became the central social institute for first Korean immigrants. First, the leaders of Korean immigrant churches had “a strong sense of responsibility for the improvement of the Korean community” and had a sympathetic attitude toward Korean immigrants’ emotional and physical problems. Second, “almost the entire leadership of the Korean churches emerged from the young intellectual patriots who had been fighting for national independence from the Japanese.” The first Korean laborers were sojourners who planned to go back to Korea once they gained enough money to do so. The independence of their home country from the Japanese colony was a critical issue for them. Even non-Christian immigrants had positive feelings towards the patriotic church leaders. Third, the Korean church functioned as “educational and social-service centers for Koreans.”<sup>40</sup> Beyond its religious functions, the Korean ethnic church played various roles, providing an information center for new arrivals, a counseling place for different domestic or economic issues, and a fellowship hall for conversation and sharing Korean foods. Korean language schools

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<sup>38</sup> Kim and Patterson, *The Koreans in America 1882-1974*, 3.

<sup>39</sup> J. Kim, *Bridge-makers*, 7.

<sup>40</sup> Choy, *Koreans in America*, 257-60.

were often started as a part of church education programs for children. With its multifunctional services for Korean immigrants, the Korean ethnic churches emerged as the most important social organization for Koreans in Hawaii from the very beginning of their lives in a new world.

### B. Third Immigration Wave

The third Korean immigration wave started as a consequence of the Immigration Act of 1965. It removed “national origin quotas” that limited the number of immigrants into the United States based on their national origin; as a result, families could be reunited and Koreans who were U.S. citizens could invite their spouses, parents, children, and siblings to America. As a result, a massive influx of Korean immigrants into the United States started from the late 1960s. 71,000 Koreans were admitted to the United States between 1969 and 1973,<sup>41</sup> and the number of Korean immigrants into America increased continuously until the late 1980s. During the second half of the 1980s, the peak period, more than 34,000 Koreans immigrated into America every year.<sup>42</sup>

However, from the late 1980s, especially after the 1988 Olympic Games in *Seoul*, Korean immigration to the United States began to shrink sharply. According to Pam Belluck, “the number of people in South Korea who received immigration visas to the United States has fallen by more than half, from about 25,500 in 1990 to about 10,800 in

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<sup>41</sup> Jo, *Korean Immigrants*, 14.

<sup>42</sup> Kwang Chung Kim and Shin Kim, “The Ethnic Roles of Korean Immigrant Churches in the United States,” in *Korean Americans and Their Religions: Pilgrims and Missionaries from a Different Shore* (ed. H. Kwon, K. Kim, and R. S. Warner; University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001), 74.

1994.”<sup>43</sup> During the early 1990s, many Korean immigrants decided to return to Korea permanently. This return movement was called “reverse migration” and about 5,000 to 6,500 Korean immigrants went back to Korea each year. “In 1987, the peak year for Korean immigration to the United States, one Korean moved back for roughly every 10 of the more than 30,000 who got visas to move to the United States. Last year [1994], however, one person returned for about every two who came.”<sup>44</sup> Many elements such as language barrier, cultural difference, and economic recession in the early 1990s in America were possible factors. However, it is generally believed that two social factors mostly contributed to reverse migration: the economic development of Korea and the American racism vividly shown during the 1992 Los Angeles riots.

The first factor is the improvement of living standard in Korea as a consequence of rapid economic development in Korea during the 1980s and 1990s. Many Koreans who chose to migrate to the United States during the 1970s and 1980s expected that their living environments and economic situations would be much better than their peers in Korea. However, while Korean immigrants in America struggled, their friends and relatives in Korea were able to enjoy a much more affluent lifestyle due to enormous economic growth.

The second factor is the destructive consequences of racism that was clearly demonstrated during the 1992 riots, through which Korean immigrants intensely recognized the depth of discrimination in their everyday lives in American society.

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<sup>43</sup> Pam Belluck, “Healthy Korean Economy Draws Immigrants Home,” *New York Times*, August 22, 1995, accessed July 18, 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/1995/08/22/nyregion/healthy-korean-economy-draws-immigrants-home.html>.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

“When they perceive that their chances of success are limited in the United States, not due to their lack of ability but because of their existential alienation from the mainstream of American society,” as Hurh correctly explains, “many immigrants feel an acute desire to return to Korea, regardless of how long they have lived in the United States.”<sup>45</sup> Their experience of various forms of racism such as exclusion and the bamboo ceiling<sup>46</sup> led Korean immigrants to accelerate their decisions to go back to their home country.

However, this reverse migration was significantly challenged by “the 1997 IMF (International Monetary Fund) crisis,” a sharp collapse of the Korean economy in late 1997. Hundreds of companies went into bankruptcy and tens of thousands of people lost their jobs almost every week during the early months of 1998. It was a “bubble-burst” in the Korean economy as an outcome of “too-fast” expansion. This crisis caused strong doubts among Korean immigrants about the solidity of the economic structure. It is generally assumed that the IMF crisis not only reduced reverse migration, but also increased immigration of Koreans into the United States. However, a relatively rapid recovery of the Korean economy<sup>47</sup> limited the impact of the crisis on Korean immigration.

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<sup>45</sup> Hurh, *The Korean Americans*, 46.

<sup>46</sup> The term “glass ceiling” usually refers to the unseen and discriminatory barrier that keeps women and ethnic minorities from rising to the upper level of the career ladder in companies and various social organizations. In order to explain the difficulties that Asian Americans experience in corporations and institutions, the term “bamboo ceiling” has been used recently. See Jane Hyun, *Breaking the Bamboo Ceiling: Career Strategies for Asians: The Essential Guide to Getting in, Moving up, and Reaching the Top* (New York: Collins, 2005).

<sup>47</sup> On August 23, 2001, Korean government paid all bailout money back to IMF.



#### a. Understanding the Third Immigration Wave Through Comparison: Differences

In order to understand the first immigration wave, I have raised three questions in the previous section: Who are they? Why did they come? And how did they live? With the same questions in mind, I will investigate the third immigration wave by comparing it with the first. I have two intentions for doing this comparison. First, I hope that the comparison may enable us to see how the third wave differed from the first wave. Second, I also want to highlight similarities between the first and third wave. By doing so, I hope to identify distinctive characteristics of Korean immigrants in America.

There are several dissimilarities between the first immigration wave and the third wave. First, their original purposes are different. If the first Korean immigrants were sojourners who planned to go back to Korea once they gained enough money and the political and economic situations of Korea allowed them to do so, the Koreans in the third wave were not sojourners but genuine “immigrants” who intended to live on the American soil permanently. However, their geo-political and socio-economic environments did not always allow them to achieve their goals. As mentioned earlier, many first Korean laborers could not go back to their homeland even when they made enough money to do so, because the Korean peninsula was colonized by the Japanese. These laborers had no other options but to settle down on the American soil. Many first Koreans became permanent residents of America despite their initial desires. In contrast, many recent immigrants during 1970s and 1980s aimed to be permanent residents when they entered the United States, but they later boarded airplanes heading to Korea as “returning immigrants” when they became tired of being victims of American racism and dealing with harsh living environments in a foreign land.

Second, the socio-economic and educational backgrounds of Korean immigrants are incomparable. While the first Korean immigrants were mainly poorly educated bachelors in their twenties and thirties from low class background, the recent immigrants were mostly well-educated, married couples with children who were in their “middle life transition” from middle class. According to Hurh, based on his previous survey in the Chicago area in the mid-1980s, the average age of Korean immigrants during the 1970s and 1980s was forty-two and about 84% of them were married and had children. They were “one of the most highly educated immigrant groups in the United States,” with about 46% of them having four year college degree and having urban middle class backgrounds.<sup>48</sup> Min’s research shows that about 54% of Korean immigrants in Los Angeles and Orange County said that they had white-collar occupations (professional, managerial, executive, and administrative jobs) when they were in Korea; only 4% had blue-collar occupations when they were in Korea.<sup>49</sup>

Third, the primary reasons for their immigration are various. The first immigrants came to Hawaii because of harsh living environments in Korea due to factors like starvation, because of missionaries’ encouragement, and because of shortage of workforce on the sugar plantation in Hawaii. Recent immigrants had very different motives for their migration to America. As mentioned earlier, the most important impetus for recent immigration was the Immigration Act of 1965, which opened the door for America widely for Asian immigration.

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<sup>48</sup> Hurh, *The Korean Americans*, 41-42.

<sup>49</sup> Pyong Gap Min, *Caught in the Middle: Korean Merchants in America’s Multiethnic Cities* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1996), 30.

However, there are several particular “push and pull factors” that contributed to the recent Korean immigrants’ decision to move into the United States. According to Moon H. Jo, “economic push and pull” and “educational push and pull” are the main reasons for them. Many Koreans, especially those who are in their middle life transition, a time for pursuing a second-career, were finding it hard to find in Korea new jobs in well-established organizations because of the highly competitive environment in Korean society. They often thought about migrating to the United States as they searched for a job or business opportunity. They also believed that the American society could provide better educational opportunities for their children. It is well known that many Korean parents are ready to sacrifice their happiness for their children’s better education.<sup>50</sup> According to Jo, political instability in the Korean society and family member’s invitations for family reunion in the United States are frequently mentioned as reasons for Koreans’ immigration to America.<sup>51</sup>

#### b. Unique Characteristics of Korea Immigrants: Similarities

There are also several similarities between the first immigration wave and the third, which possibly show the characteristics of Korean immigrants in America. The first similarity is their urban background. Just as the first immigrants were from various port cities of Korea, the majority of recent immigrants have urban middle class

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<sup>50</sup> In recent years like after year 2000, “wild goose daddy” has become a popular social phenomenon among affluent urban middle-class families. The “wild goose daddy” refers to a daddy who sent his wife and children abroad for better education. This “wild goose daddy” stays in Korea and work for money to support his family overseas. Like geese, this daddy migrates seasonally abroad to meet his family, if he has extra money to do so. See, Agnes Goh-Grapes, "Phenomenon of Wild Goose Fathers in South Korea," *Korea Times*, Feb. 22, 2009, accessed December 12, 2010, [http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/nation/2010/11/117\\_40060.html](http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/nation/2010/11/117_40060.html).

<sup>51</sup> Jo, *Korean Immigrants*, 29-46.

backgrounds. This background may explain why Korean immigrants prefer to live in metropolitan cities like Los Angeles, New York, New Jersey, and Chicago.<sup>52</sup>

The second similarity is that the new land in which they arrived is not the paradise that they have dreamed about but another “normal” society where they must struggle with harsh environments to survive. Many first Korean laborers who thought that they would land in a utopia during their trip to Hawaii had to work ten hours a day under a blazing sun to make a living and lived a lonely lifestyle in segregated camps on plantations. It is true that most of the recent immigrants are not naïve enough to expect that America would be a paradise. However, they still had “a rosy picture of America as a free and equal society with a clean, safe environment where everybody is kind to each other.”<sup>53</sup> However, their actual life was much tougher than they expected. One of the common experiences among Korean immigrants is “downward mobility.” It is a socio-economic and psychological experience of “being marginalized” or “being downgraded” in a new country.

Paul Ong and Tania Azores correctly explain this downward mobility: “Limited English-language proficiency and stringent requirements for credentials for various professional occupations prevent many [immigrants] from passing or even taking licensing examinations.” As a result, “many immigrant professionals suffer downward occupational mobility in their adopted country.”<sup>54</sup> Even though many Korean immigrants

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<sup>52</sup> Min, *Caught in the middle*, 32-40.

<sup>53</sup> Kyeyoung Park, *The Korean American Dream: Immigrants and Small Business in New York City* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1997), 39.

<sup>54</sup> Paul Ong and Tania Azores, “Asian Immigrants in Los Angeles: Diversity and Divisions,” in *The New Asian Immigration in Los Angeles and Global Restructuring* (ed. Paul Ong, Edna Bonacich, and Lucie Cheng; Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994), 111.

had college education and white-collar occupations in Korea, their professional knowledge and educational experience could not be successfully transferred to the American labor market. Their foreign background, language barrier, lack of training in America, and racism in the job market excluded them from “mainstream jobs,” like professional/technical and managerial/administrative jobs, which require high level skills with communication ability. Korean immigrants who were excluded from the mainstream job market had little choice but to start their own business in inner-city low-income neighborhoods, as will be fully described in the following sections.

Another common experience for Korean immigrants is being “forever” a stranger. Sang Hyun Lee, who has been in the United States for over thirty-eight years and teaches theology at Princeton Theological Seminary uses the two expressions, “in-betweenness” and “nonacceptance by the dominant group,” in order to describe the real conditions that Korean immigrants usually face in American society. Lee sarcastically confesses, “However long I stayed in this country, I seemed to remain a stranger, an alien.” According to him, Korean immigrants are caught in between two cultures, Korean and American. They belong to “both in some ways, but not wholly belonging to either.” They also might not be fully accepted by the dominant social group because they are not white.<sup>55</sup>

Lee explains that there is an important difference between the experience of non-white immigrants such as Asian Americans and that of white European immigrants. The European-white immigrants will experience a period of “in-betweenness,” when they first

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<sup>55</sup> Sang Hyun Lee, “Pilgrimage and Home in the Wilderness of Marginality: Symbols and Context in Asian American Theology,” in *Korean Americans and Their Religions: Pilgrims and Missionaries from a Different Shore* (ed. H. Kwon, K. Kim, and R. S. Warner; University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001), 55.

arrive. “With an increasing acculturation, ‘structural assimilation’ will follow and a European immigrant would not go on to experience non-acceptance. That person will become ‘one of us’ to the dominant group in America.” Lee, however, believes that “the straight-line assimilation theory” does not apply to nonwhite immigrants. Although a Korean immigrant, for example, could speak fluent English and has a real American name such as Mike or Cindy, “when that person walks down Main Street, he or she is still a stranger, a new arrival.”<sup>56</sup> According to Lee, being a stranger in a marginal place is the reality that Korean immigrants are experiencing on American soil.

A third similarity is the first and third wave Korean immigrants’ deep affiliation with ethnic churches. Just as the first immigrants began their own worship service shortly after their arrival in Hawaii and the church became the major center for their lives, recent immigrants predominantly get involved in Korean ethnic churches. More than two-thirds of Korean immigrants in the United States are affiliated with Korean ethnic churches. According to studies, almost 75 percent of Korean-American immigrants are related to Korean immigrant churches and about 85 percent of them attend church regularly.<sup>57</sup> This percentage of the Korean immigrants’ affiliation with the church is amazing, when it is compared with the fact that only a quarter of the population in Korea is Christian.

Scholars have suggested several reasons for the Korean immigrants’ intensive participation in their ethnic churches. Hurh and Kim argue that there are three major reasons for Koreans prevalent attendance at their ethnic churches: 1) “Religious reasons”: As a part of their obligations as believers, they go to church to worship God and hear

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 57-59.

<sup>57</sup> Kwang Chung Kim and Shin Kim, “The Ethnic Roles of Korean Immigrant Churches in the United States,” in *Korean Americans and Their Religions*, 71-94. Min, *Caught in the middle*, 40.

sermon; 2) “Psychological comfort”: They attend worship services for “the sake of peace and security of mind”; 3) “Social needs”: They want to meet other people.<sup>58</sup>

However, it is hard to draw clear lines among these religious, psychological, and social reasons because they are often interwoven. For many Korean immigrants, going to church on Sundays is a religious activity *and* participating to a social gathering. They attend the worship service in their nicest clothes not only because they culturally believe that they should wear their best before God but also because they know that other Koreans will comment on what they are wearing. Praising God and hearing God’s word are essential parts of their church activity. However, the fellowship after the service, usually having lunch together, is an equally indispensable portion of their church involvement. In fact, for some church-goers, this portion is more significant and meaningful than the formal service. Through the fellowship they can meet other Koreans and share their difficulties with other immigrants who have gone through similar experiences earlier. For some immigrants, especially those who are living in small cities and rural areas of America, the ethnic church is the only place where they can speak in Korean besides their own home and the only place where they can smell and taste their hometown food. For them, the Korean ethnic church is the place where they can quench their spiritual thirst and breathe a “Koreaness” in the midst of a Western atmosphere.

The Korean ethnic church’s worship service often becomes a religious and psychological opportunity through which immigrants reflect on their lives in America. Singing hymns, prayers, hearing the sermon, and sacrament are not just religious rituals through which they experience God and recognize God’s grace. They also function as

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<sup>58</sup> Hurh and Kim, *Korean Immigrants in America*, 130-32.

tools for understanding struggles in their lives. Korean churches often become places for many immigrants who have been frustrated due to harsh lives to find new meanings.

Korean immigrants often become exhausted not only because of language and cultural barriers or visible and invisible discriminations, but also because of their “self-doubt” that originates from their everyday lives.

Self-doubt, in its literary sense, is a lack of confidence in oneself. Many Korean immigrants often raise existential questions: “Why did I come to America?” “Why should I live like this?” “Is there any worth for my effort?” By participating in the worship service, they hope to find the explanation for their hard works in a foreign land. Preaching often plays an important role for the immigrants to re-interpret their lives through spiritual/religious lenses. Many Korean Christians regard preaching as the most essential part of the service,<sup>59</sup> because it is the time for learning about God’s word, the Bible. For them, “let’s go to learn God’s word” is interchangeable with “let’s go for worship.”<sup>60</sup> By hearing God’s word through preacher, they often meditate and religiously and spiritually re-interpret their lives and this re-interpretation leads them to find new meanings about their struggles in a foreign land.

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<sup>59</sup> Kathy Black and Seog Wan Cho, “Korean-American Worship Practices,” in *Worship across Cultures: A Handbook* (ed. Kathy Black; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998), 151.

<sup>60</sup> This expression nicely shows the importance of learning for Korean believers. It is generally acknowledged that Confucianism shaped the Korean society, especially its social structure and value system. It formulated various norms for Koreans’ behaviors and worldviews. “Confucian” Korean culture has shaped Christians’ understanding of churches and preachers. For example, the Korean term for church is 교회 (*Kyo-Hoe*, 教會), literally means “assembly for teaching” or “teaching assembly.” From the early days of the Korean church history, when the first protestant missionaries arrived in Korea in 1884, for many Koreans’ eyes, the church was a place for people to learn something new and religious. In this social environment, preachers were understood as “teachers” who taught “spiritual lessons” and preaching became “spiritual teachings” for Christians.



Korean immigrants come to the ethnic church because it often provides the services they need. Pastors and members of the church often assist new immigrants' "soft landing" on American soil by offering pick up services from the airport and helping them find places to stay. Church members share information about their adjustment such as job opportunity and business selection, and give advices about children's school and educational systems. In the church, Korean immigrants can find "free-interpreters" and "free-consultants" that are essential for their lives in America. They even can find someone to help with their legal status and financial issues. Because of the "total" spectrum of services that the ethnic church affords for Korean immigrants, it is sometimes called "small Korea" in America.

In sum, those similarities may constitute unique characteristics of Korean immigrants in America, because they have been repeated not only in the lives of the first immigrants but also in the third: urban preference, being in-between as a stranger in a marginal place, and participation in the Korean ethnic church as the center for their new lives. As scholars generally agree, the ethnic church has historically been the most significant social organization for Korean immigrants in America,<sup>61</sup> by ministering to their needs and satisfying their interwoven religious, psychological, and social desires.

## 2. 1992 Los Angeles Riots

The 1992 Los Angeles riots were triggered by the "not guilty" verdict in the trial against police officers charged for brutal beating of an African American motorist,

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<sup>61</sup>Karen J. Chai, "Beyond 'Strictness' to Distinctiveness: Generational Transition in Korean Protestant Churches," in *Korean Americans and Their Religions: Pilgrims and Missionaries from a Different Shore* (ed. H. Kwon, K. Kim, and R. S. Warner; University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001), 157-180.

Rodney King.<sup>62</sup> The verdict sparked the anger of many African Americans who have been victims of a justice system perceived to be “unjust” for a long time. The despairs and resentments of African Americans are clearly shown in a report:

The mood at the First A. M. E. Church was somber. One could still see the shock and disbelief on the faces of the church members and all who gathered to watch as the verdicts were read. “Not guilty, not guilty, not guilty.” Then I saw the Rev. Cecil (Chip) Murray. Pounding his fist into his left hand, he began to cry. “They gave us nothing, nothing. Not even a bone, dear God, not even a bone.”<sup>63</sup>

Many African Americans’ frustration and repressed communal anger against the unfair social structure began to explode in violent forms.

The great anguish that many African Americans experienced once again from the trial drove them to extreme behaviors like looting and burning local businesses, starting from Wednesday evening, April 29, 1992 to Friday, May 1. The three-day riots are often regarded as “the nation’s first multi-ethnic disturbance” which began a new era of social challenges in which the traditional bilateral conflict between black and white was given a central role in public awareness relative to more complicated multi-racial clashes among ethnic minority groups. The riots required the broader community to pay close attention to the emergence of inter-ethnic disputes that people in marginal places of society were

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<sup>62</sup> On March 3 1991, When Rodney King was driving an automobile on the Interstate 210 freeway near San Fernando, a husband-and-wife team of the California Highway Patrol, Tim and Melanie Singer spotted the car driving at a very high speed and began to chase it and signed him to pull over to the side of the road. Instead of following the signal, King sped up and exited the freeway ramp and continued to drive through residential streets. Several police cars and a helicopter joined the chase and the car was stopped at the intersection of Osborne Street and Foothill Boulevard. As King refused to obey the orders given by officers, Sergeant Stacey Koon fired a Taser, electric stun gun, twice and others began to beat him with metal batons. 56 baton blows and six kicks were used to subdue him. This brutal beating was videotaped by George Holliday from his apartment and later was televised nation-widely. Officers, Stacey Koon, Laurence Powell, Theodore Briseno, and Timothy Wind were accused for the use of excessive force.

<sup>63</sup> Robert Menschel, *Markets, Mobs & Mayhem: A Modern Look at the Madness of Crowds* (Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, 2002), 145-46.

experiencing.<sup>64</sup> The riots were viewed as “the most destructive urban riot in American history.”<sup>65</sup> 58 people died, 2,383 were wounded, and over 17,000 were arrested by law enforcements. The estimated property damage reached up to 1 billion dollars and nearly 4,500 businesses were totally or partially destroyed.

The reason for local Africans Americans’ anger seemed relatively obvious: being a victim of American racism once again. However, after three days of riots, it turned out that the main conflict was not between blacks and whites but between Korean Americans and African Americans. It was in South Central Los Angeles and near the Koreatown area where the most destructive violence took place and where Koreans were those who experienced the most damages. Among the damaged 4,500 shops, Koreans owned proximately 2,300 businesses. “47% of all businesses that were completely destroyed” were Korean-owned.<sup>66</sup> Even though Koreans were only 2% of the population in Los Angeles County at that time, they suffered 45% of the total damages of the riots. Because of the riots, the possessions that hundreds and thousands of Korean immigrants had patiently accumulated through years of hard work were literally turned into ashes. The “American dream” that many Korean immigrants had and pursued through their daily struggles in one day became an “American nightmare.” Koreans often call the riots *Sa-i-gu*, which literally means 4.29, and every year remember the agony and sorrow they experienced in a foreign land.

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<sup>64</sup> Jane Twomey, “Communication About One Another: Racial Ideology in Black and Korean Press Coverage of the 1992 Los Angeles Riot,” in *Socio-Cultural Conflict Between African American and Korean American* (ed. M. K. Asante and E. Min; New York: University Press of America, 2000), 93-94.

<sup>65</sup> Kwang Chung Kim and Shin Kim, “The Multiracial Nature of Los Angeles Unrest in 1992,” in *Koreans in the Hood: Conflict with African Americans* (ed. Kwang Chung Kim; Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 35.

<sup>66</sup> Twomey, “Communication About One Another,” 93.

After the riots, several questions have been raised not only by the victims of the riots who are eager to know the reasons for their tragedies, but also by the scholars who want to analyze the backgrounds of the riots: “Why did Korean businesses become the targets of African American’s resentments?” “Were there any severe tensions between Korean and African Americans?” “What kinds of socio-economic and political backgrounds were there behind the riots?” In order to answer those questions, we need to investigate historical, political, and socio-economic circumstances that are closely connected to the riots by analyzing the situations of African Americans, those of Korean immigrants, and the reasons for the riots. The positive and negative impacts of the riots on Korean American immigrant societies will also be fully described. The unique position of Korean immigrants as “middle-man minority” will be explained and emphasized.

#### A. African Americans in South Los Angeles

From the mid-nineteenth century to the early twentieth century, Los Angeles had been an “atypical” urban place for African Americans in that they were allowed to live anywhere in the city if they could afford it.<sup>67</sup> This tolerant atmosphere definitely appealed to them. The populations of the African Americans in Los Angeles grew from 12 in 1850 to 7,599 in 1910 and 18,738 in 1920.<sup>68</sup> From 1930s a large number of African Americans migrated from the so-called “Deep South” states like Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, and

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<sup>67</sup> Susan Anderson, “A City Called Heaven: Black Enchantment and Despair in Los Angeles,” in *The City: Los Angeles and Urban Theory at the End of the Twentieth Century* (ed. Allen J. Scott and Edward W. Soja; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 340-42.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.* In 1918, Frederick Roberts was elected as the first African American state legislator for California state assembly in Sacramento.

Mississippi to Los Angeles and founded their own communities.<sup>69</sup> Central Avenue became a popular place for early African American migrants and later (in the 1940s and 1950s) Watts and South Central Los Angeles became the most populated areas.

During World War II, war industries brought an economic boom to Los Angeles and it drew more African Americans.<sup>70</sup> As the population of the African Americans in Los Angeles grew from 30,893 in 1930 to nearly 200,000 in 1950, Watts and South Central Los Angeles attracted about two third of these new African-American migrants.<sup>71</sup> The South Los Angeles region was an “ideal” place for many African Americans where they could find decent jobs and relatively secure living places.

However, the “happy days” for African Americans in South Los Angeles did not last long, because the industrial boom that flourished in Watts and South Central soon came to an end and the de-industrialization of those regions began in the 1960s and continued in the following decades. The de-industrialization of Watts was directly affected by the rapid development of freeways that replaced railroads. Since the opening of Watts Station in 1904, Watts had played a central role as a major railway depot and stop between Los Angeles and Long Beach. As a key junction between major cities,

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<sup>69</sup> According to Edward Soja, about 600,000 African-Americans moved to Los Angeles county between 1942 and 1965, making “one of the largest internal migration streams in American history.” Edward Soja, “Los Angeles, 1965-1992: From Crisis-Generated Restructuring to Restructuring –Generated Crisis,” in *The City: Los Angeles and Urban Theory at the End of the Twentieth Century* (ed. Allen J. Scott and Edward W. Soja; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 430.

<sup>70</sup> According to Paul Ong and Evelyn Blumenberg, booming war economy attracted African Americans to Los Angeles dramatically. As a result, the number of the African American population in Los Angeles “jumped from 124,000 in 1941 to almost half a million in 1945.” Paul Ong and Evelyn Blumenberg, “Income and Racial Inequality in Los Angeles,” in *The City: Los Angeles and Urban Theory at the End of the Twentieth Century* (ed. Allen J. Scott and Edward W. Soja; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 324.

<sup>71</sup> Nancy Abelmann and John Lie, *Blue Dreams: Korean Americans and the Los Angeles Riots* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), 97.

Watts drew many people who wanted to find jobs and various businesses that provided for the basic needs of the local residents.

The construction of the major freeways in early 1960s put Watts on the margin of the transportation industry. Major freeways often offered greater convenience and accessibility for travelers, commuters, and carriers than the train systems did. As a result, Watts's resources and wealth declined. As Reyner Banham points out, Watts's "isolation from transportation contributes to every one of its misfortunes."<sup>72</sup> Watts became one of the major places in South Los Angeles that lost its major position because of fast changes in industry.

Furthermore, rapid shifts of the American economic systems from manufacturing to service/high-tech oriented industries gradually, but critically, deteriorated the financial environments of South Los Angeles. During the late 1970s and 1980s, significant numbers of major companies like General Motors, Goodyear, and Bethlehem Steel closed their plants in and around South Central not only because of the changes of domestic industrial situations but also because of the foreign competitions that altered the ways they operated. As a result, "a total of 321 plants and industries left South Central over a fifteen-year period."<sup>73</sup> The departure of these manufacturing factories and plants, which had provided relatively decent wage jobs for many local residents, primarily African Americans, devastated the economy of the region.

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<sup>72</sup> Reyner Banham, *Los Angeles: The Architecture of Four Ecologies* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971), 173.

<sup>73</sup> Paul Ong, Kye Young Park, and Yasmin Tong, "The Korean-Black Conflict and the State," in *The New Asian Immigration in Los Angeles and Global Restructuring* (ed. Paul Ong, Edna Bonacich, and Lucie Cheng; Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994), 268-69.

Quick changes of industrial structures--such as high-tech oriented businesses, more competitions among global companies, and massive influx of immigrants into Los Angeles--decisively changed the job market. The multiplication of high-skill and high-wage jobs and the even greater expansion of low-wage, low-skill, low-benefit jobs, which were often taken by legal and illegal immigrants from South America and Asia, created a rapidly shrinking middle-ground for semi-skilled and traditional-skilled blue-collar labor forces, to which many African Americans in South Central often belonged.

The traditional blue-collar workers found that they were not fully qualified for the high-tech jobs that often required college or graduate education. They also were not ready to compete with the new foreign immigrants for the hard and difficult jobs with low-paying wages. Thus the blue-collar African American workers “suffered disproportionately from deindustrialization.”<sup>74</sup> In 1990, about 40 percent of working-age residents, aged twenty to sixty five, in South Central were out of work and a third of all households lived with an income under the official poverty line.<sup>75</sup>

The deindustrialization of the South Central area resulted in the transformation of the population distribution: an “exodus” of middle-class African Americans and an influx of foreign immigrants. During the 1980s, about 20 percent of African American residents of South Central moved out, mainly to Riverside and San Bernardino; 60 percent of these were professionals and two-parent families.<sup>76</sup> At the same time, new immigrants,

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<sup>74</sup> Abelmann and Lie, *Blue Dreams*, 97.

<sup>75</sup> Ong, Park, and Tong, “The Korean-Black Conflict,” 170.

<sup>76</sup> Anderson, “A City Called Heaven,” 345-46.

particularly from Latin America, settled in the South Central area, becoming 17.7 percent of the population in 1980 and 45.2 percent in 1990.

As the economy declined and low-income new residents increased in South Central, the security of the area was threatened by gang-related violence. According to a report, even though Los Angeles Police Department's 77<sup>th</sup> Division, in charge of most of South Central, was one of the smallest among the 18 divisions of the department, it had one hundred-thirty-one homicide cases in 1990.<sup>77</sup> The departure of middle-class people, the increasing numbers of low-skilled workers, and the rise in crime rate made South Central a much less attractive market for big retail companies by competing with new foreign immigrants.

#### B. Korean Small Businesses in African American Neighborhoods

Many big companies began to abandon South Central mainly because of its weak buying power and high crime rate. According to Stuart Silverstein and Nancy Books, Target whose 73 stores were blanketing Southern California, making it the biggest retail business in the area, had no store in South Central and South Los Angeles where more than a million people were living. Vons, the biggest supermarket operator whose 300 stores were scattered in Southern California had reduced the number of stores in South Los Angeles down to two. As they described, "the community [South Central] has been painted with a broad brush by big retailers and other marketers as an almost universally

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<sup>77</sup> Stuart Silverstein and Nancy Rivera Books, "Shoppers in Need of Stores: Lack of Retail Industries and Other Businesses in South Los Angeles, California," *Los Angeles Times*, November 24, 1991, accessed October 20, 2010, [http://articles.latimes.com/1991-11-24/news/mn-481\\_1\\_south-los-angeles](http://articles.latimes.com/1991-11-24/news/mn-481_1_south-los-angeles).



destitute, crime-ridden area that is best to avoid.”<sup>78</sup> As a result, the residents in South Central became “abandoned consumers” who needed to drive to surrounding areas to find goods at reasonable prices. Major retailers’ and supermarket chains’ avoidance of the area opened an opportunity for those who wanted to open a business with limited capital. In South Central, many Korean immigrants took this opportunity and began to operate small shops for the “abandoned customers.”

It is an interesting social phenomenon that foreign-born immigrants are more likely than the native-born to get involved in small business as owners or unpaid workers for family business.<sup>79</sup> Scholars have suggested several theories to explain this phenomenon. First there is the “disadvantaged theory.” According to it, immigrants are disadvantaged in the American labor market, not only because of a language barrier, a lack of training in America, a lack of cultural familiarity, and racism, but also because of problems in transferring their educational credentials and occupational knowledge and skills into the American society. The limited occupational opportunities in the “mainstream” job market often push foreign-born professionals to get interested in operating small businesses. Korean immigrants as a part of bigger immigrant minorities also face these difficulties. Their experience of being “unsuccessful” in the highly competitive and discriminatory labor market led Koreans to become self-employed by creating small businesses where language skills and familiarity with American culture are much less required.

Second there is the “resources theory.” Not all those who are excluded from

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Marilyn Fernandez and Kwang Chung Kim, “Self-Employment Rates of Asian Immigrant Groups: An Analysis of Intragroup and Intergroup Differences,” *IMR* Vol. 32, No. 3 (Autumn 1998), 654.

“mainstream jobs” start their own businesses. Those who begin their own stores might have the desire to climb up the ladder of social success and they might have access to the capital necessary to launch their own small businesses. There are three different types of financial resources immigrants often use: the money they bring from their own countries; family savings they put aside from their earnings in the United States; and loans they borrow from family members, friends, and ethnic banks. In 1970s, many Korean immigrants could not bring enough money to start a business, because the Korean government allowed the immigrants to come with only small amounts of money, ranging from two hundred to one thousand dollars for each immigrant. Therefore most Korean immigrants had to work for many years as employees in order to save enough money to establish their own stores. For many Korean immigrants who had limited financial resources, low-income inner-city minority area like South Central of Los Angeles was an ideal location to start their own businesses.

Third is the “opportunity structure theory.” Even immigrants with enough resources to launch their own businesses, there must be an opportunity for them to start. They must find a “gap” among the preexisting markets to jump in or a “left behind place” that previous store runners have abandoned or avoided. Korean immigrants often take job opportunities that are usually available for foreign-born immigrants, that is, jobs “which generally do not require direct competition with native-born workers, such as occupations avoided or not taken by native-born workers. One such opportunity is a self-employed, marginal small business, primarily serving minority customers and/or with considerable disadvantages.” Marginal business opportunities available for immigrants are “businesses for ethnic customers” and for “urban poor minority customers” or businesses that sell

“unique cultural products” and “unstandardized manufactured goods.”<sup>80</sup> Korean small businesses usually specialize in produce retail, grocery/liquor retail, retail of Asian-and Korean-imported items, dry cleaners and laundries, and nail salons.<sup>81</sup> Other businesses for ethnic customers, like Korean restaurants, bookstores, and food markets, are also available for Korean immigrants.

According to studies (such as Hurh’s and Min’s) and census data, Korean Americans have the highest self-employment rate among all ethnic groups in America. Won Moo Hurh’s survey shows that in 1979, about 32 percent of Korean immigrants in Los Angeles answered that they were owners of small businesses.<sup>82</sup> The 1990 census data shows that almost 35 percent of foreign-born Koreans aged from twenty-four to sixty-four were self-employed. However, Pyong Gap Min, who interviewed randomly selected Korean immigrants, argues that the percentage of Korean’s involvement in small business is much higher than what census data indicates. His own 1996 study reveals that about 48 percent of Koreans in Los Angeles and Orange counties were self-employed.<sup>83</sup>

Korean immigrants’ deep engagement in small businesses has not changed easily, rather it continued in the years following the riots. According to census data, in 2000 about twenty-eight percent of Korean immigrants were engaged in self-employed small

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 658.

<sup>81</sup> Min, *Caught in the middle*, 54.

<sup>82</sup> Hurh, *The Korean Americans*, 42.

<sup>83</sup> Min explains that there is a difference between actual rate of Korean’s self-employment and that of census data. He suggests three reasons for the difference: “First, family members of self-employed persons often do not report their work at family stores to the surveys. Second, people who engage in both self-employment and employment usually report themselves only as being employed. Third, those who peddle with no business license and those who run illegal businesses are not likely to report their self-employment.” According to his own survey through interviews with selected Korean married women in New York City, “56 percent of married Korean immigrants were self-employed.” Min, *Caught in the middle*, 47-48.

businesses.<sup>84</sup> It is generally acknowledged that family members of small business owners are willing to help their spouses or parents as unpaid family workers. Therefore, the number of Korean Americans who are linked, directly or indirectly, to small business could be much higher than what is indicated by the census data.

Some argue that Korean immigrants' heavy concentration on small businesses is practically related to their lack of proficiency in English.<sup>85</sup> Their argument is based on the comparative fact that the self-employment rate of Filipinos, who can usually communicate in English, is only 5 percent. It is true that communication ability in English is important in getting a job in the general labor market. However, there is no concrete evidence that a lack of proficiency in English is directly related to someone's self-employment in a small business. For example, how can we understand the relatively lower self-employment rate, about 11 percent, of Vietnamese and Chinese immigrants who demonstrate difficulties in talking in English? How can we make sense of the fact that almost 13 percent of native-born whites are self-employed?<sup>86</sup> As mentioned earlier, the lack of fluency in English is only one of several reasons for the high rate in self-employment of Korean immigrants.

It is interesting that one pre-departure survey conducted in Seoul, Korea in 1986 showed that 61 percent of Koreans who were planning to migrate into the United States responded that if they came to America they would like to run a small business.<sup>87</sup> This

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<sup>84</sup> Le, C.N., "Asian Small Businesses," accessed September 2, 2010, <http://www.asian-nation.org/small-business.shtml>. Le's data is based on 2000 census information.

<sup>85</sup> Paul Ong and Tania Azores, "Asian Immigrants in Los Angeles: Diversity and Divisions," in *The New Asian Immigration*, 110-21.

<sup>86</sup> Le, C.N., "Asian Small Businesses."

<sup>87</sup> Min, *Caught in the Middle*, 49.

survey implies that some immigrants' decision for jobs in America could be pre-selected based on the advice and information they received even before their departure. New immigrants often follow the paths that their predecessors explored, built, and paved. Therefore, Korean immigrants' deep engagement in small businesses is a result of combined factors including racism in the general labor market, linguistic and capital limitations, but also immigrant culture and expectation.

Korean immigrants who were excluded from the "mainstream" job markets found business opportunities in low-income inner-city area, like South Central Los Angeles, where minority customers were looking for a store to shop. What Korean immigrants started in South Central were businesses for "urban poor minority customers" who had been avoided and abandoned by mainstream retail companies. Korean merchants recognized the "gap" between minority customers and mainline retail companies and started their own businesses on these margins. In the eyes of many Korean immigrants, the inner-city low-income neighborhood was an attractive location where they could open a business with limited financial resources while staying away from direct competition with big retail chains.

Korean immigrants who were not familiar with American culture and not fluent in English had often the naïve expectation that it would be much easier to run a shop in neighborhoods inhabited by "fellow" ethnic minorities (African Americans and Hispanic Americans) rather than in neighborhoods inhabited by the dominant social group, whites. However, the actual situation of the Korean small businesses in the African American neighborhood was much more difficult than they had hoped. The 1992 riots became a "tsunami" that swept their unrealistic expectations away and showed them the real

America.

### C. Analyzing the Riots

Scholars have analyzed and debated the reasons for the riots. There are three major approaches to the essential causes of the riots. The first approach primarily focuses on individual and communal hostility between the African American customers and Korean merchants. It emphasizes the negative attitudes between them, which often originated in personal encounters that African American customers had with Korean shopkeepers. It also highlights mutual prejudices from biased stereotypes promoted by mass media and popular culture, like movies.

The second approach concentrates on American racism, more specifically white supremacy,<sup>88</sup> which is shown and reinforced through mass media. According to this option, white supremacy formulates a racial hierarchy, in Cornel West's terminology, "American racial caste system,"<sup>89</sup> and stimulates tensions among minority groups. The mass media often function as the most important and effective tool for the dominant group to maintain the racial hierarchy. Scholars examine the mass media's coverage of the riots and point to racism in the broader society as the basic cause for the riots.

The third approach analyzes the socio-economic structures of the South Central

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<sup>88</sup> "White supremacy" is a concept that white, as a dominant social group, is superior to other ethnic minority groups intellectually, socially, economically, and culturally. This "superior" and "inferior" notion naturally formulates hierarchical orders among ethnic groups with whites on the top and "non-whites" below. A minority group recognized closer to the "white norms" will take higher position on the ladder of racial hierarchy and one who is farther from them will be placed on the bottom of it. Twomey, "Communicating About One Another," 94-95. See also very helpful entries in "Racism and Christianity Cluster," in *The Cambridge Dictionary of Christianity* (ed. Daniel Patte; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 1041-48.

<sup>89</sup> Cornel West, *Race Matters* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), 105.

Los Angeles society by focusing on the unique role that Korean merchants play in it. This approach employs a “middle-men minority” theory in analyzing the key forces that provoked the riots. According to this theory, Korean business owners as “middle-men minority” could not avoid to anger both their African American customers and their white suppliers because of their “middle-men” position.

a. Mutual Misunderstandings and Prejudices between Koreans and African Americans

Cultural differences often create misunderstandings and language barriers deepen them. Misunderstandings generate prejudices, which are often exacerbated by stereotypes learned from elsewhere, like movies or news networks. It is possible that the riots, especially the African American rioters’ attacks on the Korean stores, were the result of accumulated misunderstandings and prejudices, which have been expressed in negative attitudes between African American customers and Korean merchants.

Korean small business owners often demonstrate negative perceptions of African Americans. Some of the biased images they have on their customers are: (1) “African Americans are lazy and dishonest”; (2) “Most of them are welfare recipients”; (3) “Many of them are drug addicts and alcoholics”; (4) “Family value and work ethics are lacking among African Americans.”<sup>90</sup> Those destructive impressions are not just individual but communal; this meant that many Korean shopkeepers shared similar impressions of their African American customers.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Molefi Kete Asante and Eungjun Min, Preface to *Socio-Cultural Conflict Between African American and Korean American* (ed. M. K. Asante and E. Min; New York: University Press of America, 2000), vii.

<sup>91</sup> For detail explanations of Korean merchants’ negative attitudes toward African American customers, see Ronald Weitzer, “Racial Prejudice among Korean Merchants in African American Neighborhoods,” *The Sociological Quarterly*. Vol. 38, No. 4 (Autumn 1997): 587-606.

From where did Korean business owners get these images of African American people? Several scholars argue that Korean immigrants already had disapproving images of “black people,” when they were in Korea. “Images of black criminality and poverty,” Jennifer Lee explains, “plague the U.S. media and films and are easily transported to foreign television, impressing on America’s newcomers stereotypes that blacks are poor, violent, uneducated, and dangerous.”<sup>92</sup> Edward Chang also underscores that “many Korean immigrants arrive in the United States with ready-made negative views of African Americans” by being exposed to American movies and/or television shows where African Americans are often represented as slaves, criminals, alcoholics, drug addicts, gang members, and lazy people relying on social welfare.<sup>93</sup> “After immigration, shopkeepers’ selective experiences with poor inner city blacks seem to reinforce their stereotypes about blacks.”<sup>94</sup> For Korean merchants, all the negative images of African American people are interconnected in their lives.

The Korean immigrants’ “ready-made” biased perspectives on African Americans often functioned as negative lenses through which they “watch” closely over their “black” customers. Their “suspicious” eyes often witness unacceptable behaviors, like shopliftings, burglaries, verbal abuses, and various forms of threats. These improper acts often confirmed the preconceptions of African Americans that they already carried. They also observed the prevailing poverty and gang-related violence in surrounding

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<sup>92</sup> Jennifer Lee, *Civility in the City: Blacks, Jews, and Koreans in Urban America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 80.

<sup>93</sup> Edward T. Chang, “New Urban Crisis: Korean-African American Relations,” in *Koreans in the Hood*, 43.

<sup>94</sup> Heon Cheol Lee, “Conflict between Korean Merchants and Black Customers: A Structural Analysis,” in *Koreans in the Hood: Conflict with African Americans* (ed. Kwang Chung Kim; Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 117.



neighborhoods. The Korean merchants' encounter with African American customers and their experience in "black" neighborhood often intensified their prejudices toward African Americans.

African American customers in South Central Los Angeles also had negative impressions of the Korean small business owners. They often blamed the Korean shopkeepers for viewing them as potential thieves and for taking economic advantage of them by over-charging for the goods they were selling. Some of them called the Korean shop owners "blood suckers" and "cold-blooded exploiters" who were taking away the financial resources of the African American communities. They also accused Korean business owners for not hiring African Americans as employees and for not reinvesting money in the neighborhood community. One of the main complaints that African American customers had was that Korean shopkeepers were rude and disrespectful to them because they did not smile, dropped coins, did not respond to their questions, or did not engage in general topics of conversations.

It is generally believed that the Korean immigrants' lack of English ability and their traditional cultural comportment contributed to what was perceived by African Americans as negative attitudes toward them. Indeed, the Korean immigrants' lack of English fluency often prevented them from answering questions and explaining issues that the buyers were concerned about. They often chose to be silent or to pretend not to hear anything instead of replying in a broken English that native speakers would hardly understand. Traditional Korean culture taught Koreans, especially women, not to smile at strangers and not to look at others directly in the eyes while talking to them. Looking someone in the eyes, especially if that person is an elder, would be regarded as aggressive

or arrogant in Korean culture. However, in American culture, not smiling and lack of eye contact with a dialogue partner is commonly interpreted as “ignoring” that person. Such cultural differences created misunderstandings between Koreans and African Americans.

Korean shopkeepers’ feelings of superiority over their African American customers also generated rude attitudes. Arrogant thoughts based on a false comparison such as: “I have become a successful business owner within five years of immigration. As a native-born American Black, what are you doing now?”<sup>95</sup> often created worthless self-boasting over African Americans. Some Koreans who regarded the Confucian emphasis on one’s educational background as critical in evaluating a person sometimes looked down on the less educated local residents of the South Central area. Arrogance and a false sense of superiority contributed to the negative images that Koreans had among African Americans.

The hostile relationships between Korean shop owners and African American buyers were not a phenomenon unique in Los Angeles. Other major cities, like New York and Chicago, have also witnessed “black” customers’ boycott Korean-owned stores and other hostile interactions. There were major “black boycotts” against Korean businesses in New York City, which started in 1981 and increased in the late 1980s and early 1990s.<sup>96</sup> A person’s unpleasant encounter with a Korean merchant often added to the communal images of Korean Americans that many “black customers” share. These kinds

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<sup>95</sup> Min, *Caught in the Middle*, 123.

<sup>96</sup> According to Min, the first major “black boycott” occurred in Jamaica, Queens in June 1981, which lasted five weeks. The 1984 Harlem boycott against Ike Grocery lasted almost five months. The longest boycott was the 1990-91 Brooklyn boycott, which began January 1990 and continued to May 1991. In this boycott, immigrants from Haiti and other Caribbean islands were the majority of “black boycotters.” Min, *Caught in the Middle*, 73-80.

of hostile feelings towards Korean business owners in particular and negative images of Korean Americans in general were behind the 1992 riots.

The resentment of African American communities toward Korean shop owners erupted when they heard the news that a Korean merchant, Soon Ja Du, killed a 15-year-old African American girl, Latasha Harlins on March 16, 1991 – two weeks after Rodney King’s beating. In the morning of that Saturday, Harlins entered the Empire Liquor Market in South Central and put a \$1.79 bottle of orange juice in her bag and approached the counter with money in her hand. Soon Ja Du did not notice the money; she accused her to be a thief, claiming that Harlins was stealing the orange juice. According to two eyewitnesses at the store, a 9-year-old boy and a 13-year-old girl, and the security videotape that captured the critical moments, there was a sharp exchange of angry words like “bitch” between the two women. Du accused Harlins of stealing the orange juice and grabbed Harlins’ sweater in order to snatch her backpack. Harlins responded that she was about to pay for the juice and forcefully pulled back her sweater, and punched Du’s face several times; Du fell behind the counter. After this intense fight, Harlins bent down to pick up the bottle of orange juice that had fallen down during the dispute. Du took a gun from under the counter. Harlins turned and began to leave for the door. Du pulled the trigger and shot her on the back of head.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Brenda Stevenson provides detail backgrounds of Harlins and Du. According to him, Harlins lost her mom when she was eight years old and her father left her soon. She lived with her maternal grandmother with her two siblings. One day while arguing with her sister, she threw a fork at her, which caused permanent blindness in one eye of her sister. In 1991, she was a freshman in high school and began to get involved in sexual relationship with older men. Before the day of the fatal shooting she spent a night with a 29-year-old man who dropped her at the Du’s store. Harlins’ maternal uncle used to work for Du’s store and got fired by Du because of his refusal to do overtime without payment as requested by the owner. Harlins’ family members used to warn her about Du’s rude attitude toward customers. Du’s family had a bad reputation for Harlins’ family. However, because it was the nearest store from Harlins’ house, she used to stop by it.

This brief scuffle was videotaped by security camera and showed in courtroom and later in public.<sup>98</sup> Just as the videotape of Rodney King's beating, which occurred only two weeks earlier, evoked enormous public reactions, so Du's shooting video caused hot debates not only between the defense attorneys and the prosecutor but also among many viewers. The trial of Du was delayed several times and the case was relocated from Compton to downtown Los Angeles. The trial started on Monday, September 30. Out of 12 jurors, there were 5 African Americans, 4 Latino Americans, 3 European Americans, and no Korean. Joyce Karlin, a European American, was assigned as trial and sentencing judge. In the trial, Du's attorney, Charles Lloyd argued that Du's behavior was "self-defense and the shooting was an accident." He emphasized the Du family's fear of constant threats from their customers and gang members including her son's experience of being "beaten and forced to pay extortion at the store." He also asserted that Du was

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Soon Ja Du was the daughter of the only doctor in her hometown village in Korea. After college, she married to Mr. Du who became a major in the Korean army. They enjoyed a relatively affluent life in Korea. They moved to Los Angeles in 1976 so that their three children might have a better education. Her immigrant life was a harsh struggle to adjust to a new low-social status and new low-pay jobs in local garment factory. She had to work to survive. Finally the Du family purchased a convenience store in Saugus and the Empire Liquor Market in Compton. She worked fourteen hours per day at Saugus store and occasionally at the Liquor Market in Compton where the Du family got involved in conflict with gang members. She admitted her fear of African Americans and her disrespectful attitude toward African Americans customers with distorted prejudice such as "Blacks are lazy," "they are living on welfare," and "they are consuming alcoholic beverages instead of feeding children." On the Saturday morning of the fatal shooting, she was at the Compton store in order to give her son a day of rest. See, Brenda E. Stevenson, "Latasha Harlins, Soon Ja Du, and Joyce Karlin: A Case Study of Multicultural Female Violence and Justice on the Urban Frontier," *The Journal of African American History*, Vol. 89, No. 2. (Spring 2004): 152-176.

<sup>98</sup> The videotape was shown repeatedly during the riots by nation-wide mass media. The edited version of it is still available on a website, Youtube.com., is titled, "Latasha Harlins - Miscarriage of Justice." <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XuIY2I-kyKM>. In this picture, Du's shooting is repeated several times and Du's trial in which she was not sentenced to jail is juxtaposed with that of Brendan Chi who was charged for mistreating his dog and sentenced to 30 days in Jail. The picture delivers a message of "corrupted judicial system" and focuses on the death of Harlins by Du's shooting. It quotes a media comment, "There have long been problems between Blacks & Koreans in South Central but Latasha's death has heightened tensions to explosive levels" and shows angry faces of African Americans who are shouting and demonstrating in front of the Empire Liquor Market in Compton.

afraid for her own safety after hearing about a nearby Korean businessman's death during a recent robbery.<sup>99</sup>

Du's son, Joseph, said during the trial that he witnessed numerous burglaries and that he received a threat to kill him and to burn down the store from gang members and that he talked about those threats with his mother. Du said that she believed Harlins was a gang member, when she was punched. Judge Karlin admitted that the Du family had been victims of repeated robberies and threats, physically and verbally, by local gang members and other customers. Finally, Judge Karlin sentenced Du to "a suspended ten-year term in the state penitentiary, five years probation, 400 hours of community service, a \$500 fine, and the cost of Latasha Harlins's funeral and medical expenses."<sup>100</sup> This sentence triggered angry reactions including picketing and demonstration organized mainly by African American activists like Danny Bakewell from the Brotherhood Crusade. The Du trial exacerbated the existing tensions between African Americans and Koreans to a "dangerous" level.

Against this intensified tensions, a rapper, Ice Cube released his new album, "Death Certificate," on October 29<sup>th</sup>, 1991. One of the songs in the album, "Black Korea" contains racially charged lines of lyrics:

Oriental one-penny-counting motherfuckers  
So don't follow me, up and down your market  
Or your little chop suey ass'll be a target of the nationwide boycott  
So pay respect to the black fist  
Or we'll burn your store right down to a crisp.

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<sup>99</sup> Andrea Ford, "Videotape Shows Teen Being Shot After Fight Killing: Trial opens for Korean grocer who is accused in the slaying of a 15-year-old black girl at a South-Central store." *Los Angeles Times*, October 01, 1991, accessed March 20, 2010, [http://articles.latimes.com/1991-10-01/local/me-3692\\_1\\_black-girl](http://articles.latimes.com/1991-10-01/local/me-3692_1_black-girl).

<sup>100</sup> Stevenson, "Latasha Harlins," 165.

In his song, Cube uses unacceptable and very offensive terms against Korean merchants such as “motherfuckers” and “chop suey ass.” He implies, possibly encourages, a national boycott against Korean stores, reminding several “black boycotts” against Korean businesses in New York City. He requires Korean merchants to show admiration to the “black fist.” Even though it is not clear what “black fist” means here, this expression could be related to the violence of gangsters.<sup>101</sup> Cube threatens Koreans; if they do not respect “black fist,” “we’ll burn your store right down to a crisp.” Although there is no evidence that this song directed gangsters or African American arsonists to burn Korean stores down during the riots, it must have helped spreading destructive ideas of burning down Korean businesses whose shopkeepers do not respect “blacks.”<sup>102</sup>

According to a study,<sup>103</sup> about one third of African Americans in the Los Angeles area showed negative feelings toward Asians. However only one eighth of them revealed the same emotion toward whites and Hispanics. It is also interesting that many affluent middle-class African Americans in the Inglewood region demonstrate more negative attitudes toward Asian immigrants than the relatively poor African Americans in South Central who directly encounter Asian, especially Korean shop owners, in their everyday lives. The middle-class African Americans in Inglewood who believe that

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<sup>101</sup> Ice Cube has been credited as one who made “gangsta rap” popular during the late 1980s as a member of hip hop group, N.W.A. (Niggaz With Attitude). As a subgenre of hip hop, “Gangsta rap” often reflects vicious actions and lifestyles of inner-city gangsters. It is interesting that N.W.A. originated from Compton where Du’s Empire Liquor Market is located.

<sup>102</sup> A song titled, “No Vaseline,” from the same album also has been criticized not only because it promotes anti-Semitism but also because it advocates murdering his former manager, Jerry Heller by saying “Get rid of that Devil real simple, put a bullet in his temple.” For detail coverage of the destructive effects of Cube’s album, see Chuck Philips, “Wiesenthal Center Denounces Ice Cube’s Album, Rap: Jewish human rights group finds ‘Death Certificate’ lyrics racist and calls for retailers to stop selling record.” *Los Angeles Times*, November 02, 1991, accessed April 8, 2010, [http://articles.latimes.com/1991-11-02/entertainment/ca-735\\_1\\_ice-cube](http://articles.latimes.com/1991-11-02/entertainment/ca-735_1_ice-cube).

<sup>103</sup> Chang, “New Urban Crisis,” 45.

institutionalized discrimination against African Americans prevent them from achieving social success seem to understand Korean merchants as a part of American racism that has victimized African Americans for a long time.

In this aspect, Molefi Asante's sharing his experience is helpful. One day Asante went to a local barbershop where he met fellow African Americans waiting to get their haircut. After describing their complaints about Korean merchants in their neighborhood, mainly their rude and arrogant attitudes, he made a comment, "Such behavior brings to the mind of African Americans the experiences with whites in the South."<sup>104</sup> It is striking that for some African Americans, Korean business owner's behaviors and manners overlapped with those of whites in the south who often benefit from the American racial hierarchy in which African Americans are treated like "second-class citizens." Connecting Koreans with whites in the South goes well with Jane Towner's argument that some African Americans believe that "Korean merchants were getting ahead at their expense."<sup>105</sup> Negative images of Korean merchants and identifying Korean entrepreneurs' deeds with those of whites in the South contributed to African Americans' communal resentment against Korean businesses and their owners.

#### b. American Racism and Mass Media

Mass media play many roles in modern society. On a surface level, it seems that mass media simply deliver news and information to readers and audiences. At a deeper

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<sup>104</sup> Molefi Kete Asante, "African Americans and Korean Americans: Modeling the American Dream," in *Socio-Cultural Conflict Between African American and Korean American* (ed. M. K. Asante and E. Min; New York: University Press of America, 2000), 22.

<sup>105</sup> Jane Towner, "Koreans and Blacks in America: A Brief Pre-riot History to the 1992 Los Angeles Riot," in *Socio-Cultural Conflict Between African American and Korean American* (ed. M. K. Asante and E. Min; New York: University Press of America, 2000), 30.

level, however, mass media actually construct social realities by providing interpretations of happenings around us. Therefore it is important for modern people who are heavily dependent on mass media for necessary information to know “how mass media construct a social reality for the members of a society.”<sup>106</sup> The representations of Asians in mass media and popular culture like movies are important because they often shape the images that other ethnic groups have of them. Stereotypes promoted by mass media often result in negative attitudes and hostility toward others.

Doobo Shim who investigated the mass media’s coverage of the riots helps us understand how “the logic of television news” works and how it sustains the status quo, racial hierarchy, by promoting the established stereotypes of ethnic minority groups. Shim explains that the mass media industry has two major goals: 1) To make a profit by reaching as many audiences and consumers as possible; 2) To create positive circumstances for their partner companies by manipulating public opinions. In order to attract many watchers, television program producers must have a “marketable program” composed of “responsiveness” and “familiarity.”

A program should appeal to the curiosity of audiences enough to generate responses and should be recognizable immediately by maintaining familiar concepts and images of viewers. As watchers have a certain expectation for each genre like sitcom and melodrama, they also have expectations for the role of each ethnic group: “whites will be portrayed as heroic, and minorities will be villainous. In this process, the stereotypes of

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<sup>106</sup> Jung S. Ryu, “The Image of Minorities in the Mass Media,” in *Community in Crisis: The Korean American Community After the Los Angeles Civil Unrest of April 1992* (ed. George Totten III and H. Eric Schockman; Los Angeles: Center for Multiethnic and Transnational Studies, University of Southern California, 1994), 244.



specific groups are reproduced and recycled forever.”<sup>107</sup> As a result, the representations of certain ethnic group in news coverage cannot be totally different from those in fictional genres to maintain “familiarity.”

The roles that ethnic minorities, especially Asians, play in Hollywood movies are often negative, abnormal, and even dangerous. According to Shim, Asians in American movies, during the Reagan-Bush era, “were more often seen in the roles of gangsters/drug dealers and enemies to whites than in any other roles in films.” Korean business owners were portrayed as “penny-pinchers” and became targets of racial hatred because of their stereotypical behaviors as “evil” shopkeepers in movies like *Do the Right Thing* (1989) and *Falling Down* (1992).<sup>108</sup>

Negative representations of Asians, particularly Koreans, in blockbuster movies are not limited to the Reagan-Bush era. In the beginning part of a movie, *Menace II Society*, released in May 1993, two African American young men named Caine and Kevin enter a liquor store in South Central Los Angeles. Caine begins to drink a bottle of beer without paying for it in advance while the Korean shopkeeper and his wife are watching them suspiciously. When they are about to leave the store, the shopkeeper says “I feel sorry for your mother” to Kevin nicknamed O-Dog. Then, O-Dog becomes so angry that he pulls out his gun from his pocket. Then he shoots shopkeeper and drags his horrified wife into a room in the back of the store. He also shoots and kills the wife and grabs a surveillance video camera tape. He comes out of the room and takes money from

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<sup>107</sup> Doobo Shim, “The Logic of Television News: The case of the Los Angeles Riots,” in *Socio-Cultural Conflict Between African American and Korean American* (ed. M. K. Asante and E. Min; New York: University Press of America, 2000), 76.

<sup>108</sup> Shim, “The Logic of Television News,” 76.

the pocket and sock of the dead shopkeeper. Later he shows the videotape to his friends for entertainment.

In another movie, “Outbreak,” released March 1995 that topped the US box office for three weeks, Korean sailors brought a monkey contaminated with a deadly virus to the United States illegally. In the movie, the virus in the Monkey is transferred to human beings and consequently it endangers thousands of people in a rural town in California and indirectly all Americans. It is not difficult to find the same stereotypical portrayals of Asians in general and Koreans in particular not only in Hollywood movies but also in other cultural and literary products made in America.<sup>109</sup>

Shim provides his own analyses of news coverage of the riots broadcasted by major news channels like ABC, CBS, and NBC. According to his examination, several major news networks paid more attention to the incident of Reginald Denny, a white truck driver who was severely beaten by four African American men, than to other ethnic minority victims being brutalized or killed. They depicted Korean merchants as “gun-toting vigilantes” and described the targeting of Korean stores by African Americans as “vengeance.” They led watchers to believe that the main cause of the riots was the hostile relationship between African American customers and Korean shopkeepers by showing repeatedly the videos of Soon Ja Du’s shooting of Latasha Harlins. By doing so, they formulated and promoted the viewpoint that the riots were retaliation from African American customers for the Korean owners’ evil behaviors. Due to careful “play” of the mass media, viewers were led to juxtapose two independent events together: the white police officers’ beating an African American motorist was overlapped with a Korean

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<sup>109</sup> For negative and stereotypical portrayals of Asians in American popular cultures, see Robert G. Lee, *Orientalism: Asian Americans in Popular Culture* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1999).

shopkeeper's shooting an African American girl. Actually the two incidents were separate events that happened within a two-week period. If the mass media's ploy worked, the misguided African American watchers' resentment against the dominant social group, whites, could be turned against the Korean merchants who showed the "Korean racism against blacks."<sup>110</sup> Shim's conclusion is astonishing,

By framing the riot as the result of minority on minority conflict white responsibility for the riots is exempted. In addition, since both minorities are depicted as threats to white civilization, white arbitration was seen as necessary. The police and the army, who had earlier abandoned their duties, intervened to establish law and order. Now the racial hierarchy was justified... The last scene of this drama was that blacks and whites cleaned up the streets and prayed for peace at church. Koreans, however, were excluded from the denouement. In a general myth, in the denouement all good people rejoice at the recovered peace, and the villains have vanished. In this case, the Koreans' absence indicated that Koreans were not regarded as members of the "American community."<sup>111</sup>

The mass media owned and operated by a dominant ethnic group functioned as a useful tool for maintaining racial hierarchy, white supremacy, by portraying ethnic minority groups as "dangerous others" who jeopardized the "established current peace," the status quo. The result was that African Americans' anger against white racism was converted into anger against a politically powerless minority group as mass media framed Koreans as the one who victimized African Americans.

Not only nation-wide mass media controlled by the white dominant ethnic group, but also ethnic newspapers operated by ethnic minorities promoted racial hierarchy. Jane Twomey who examined both *The Korea Times*, a daily Korean newspaper published in Los Angeles and the *Los Angeles Sentinel*, a weekly newspaper, argues that the two

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<sup>110</sup> Nadia Y. Kim, *Imperial Citizens: Koreans and Race from Seoul to LA* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2008), 181.

<sup>111</sup> Shim, "The Logic of Television News," 76

ethnic newspapers actually contributed to “the needs of a larger White power structure” whose best interest is “to have both subordinate groups [African Americans and Koreans] fighting one another rather than united and fighting against a dominant White power.” According to her, the Korean newspaper “portrayed Koreans as morally and economically superior, and thus closer to the White norm and higher on the American racial hierarchy.” The *Sentinel* kept at a distance the “black community” from “the rioters and focused on moral acts such as the rescue of Denny and the role of the African American church leaders and celebrities who voiced outrage over the verdict, yet called for peace.”<sup>112</sup> By concentrating on fragmented and dramatized personal stories, those ethnic newspapers failed to provide broader socio-economic and political pictures of the riots.

In the ethnic newspapers, as a result, the riots were described as isolated incidents between the two ethnic minorities with no offered perspective on what a historical moment the riots were for racial justice in America. The newspapers attempted to justify their own ethnic group’s behaviors and emphasized its moral superiority over the other group’s in order to place its ethnic group in a higher position of racial hierarchy. By so doing, they deepened the gaps between African Americans and Koreans and intensified the hostile tensions between them. Towney correctly criticizes, “[o]ne of the insidious elements of racial ideology in the minority press is its ability to divide and conquer minority communities while maintaining White hegemony.”<sup>113</sup> Just as the national news networks intentionally ignored the riots’ socio-political discourse and strengthened white

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<sup>112</sup> Towney, “Koreans and Blacks in America,” 100-01.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 101.

supremacy, the ethnic newspapers promoted the same perspective, namely that the main reason for the riots is the harsh conflict between Korean merchants and their African American customers and that whites have “approval power” over each ethnic group’s behavior. American racism deeply embedded in various genres of popular culture, like music, movies, and novels, has been intensified not only by the nation-wide mass media but also by the ethnic newspapers.

c. The Korean Merchant as a “Middleman Minority”

Hubert Blalock is one of the first scholars who have developed the “middleman minority” theory. According to Blalock, middleman minority group can be observed “in the case of peasant-feudal types of societies” that consist of “a numerically small elite, a very large group of peasant masses, and a relatively small middle class.”<sup>114</sup> The group can be “either a distinct ethnic group or a group of mixed-bloods” that functions as a mediator between the two major classes as a “buffer group.” Middleman minority groups from a different culture often perform better than native members in markets where impersonal deals of buying and selling are occurring. Jews in Europe, Chinese in Southeast Asia, Indians in South Africa are possible examples.

Blalock points out that the position of middleman minority group is vulnerable. Its position and security is heavily dependent on the goodwill of the elite who brought them to the host society. “As long as it is fulfilling its role successfully, but perhaps not too successfully, it will be protected by the elite.” However, at the time of stress, it

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<sup>114</sup> Hubert M. Blalock, Jr., *Toward A Theory of Minority-Group Relations* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1967), 80.

becomes “a natural scapegoat.”<sup>115</sup> A distinct minority group, culturally or ethnically becomes an easy target of aggression at the time of conflict by being left unprotected. It is less likely that the minority group can merge into the elite group, because it is much safer to have a “triadic relationship” of elite, intermediate, and masses than to have dyadic system of elite and masses. The middleman group’s function as a “buffer group” that plays the role of “a shock absorber” is essential to maintain the stability of the social system.<sup>116</sup>

Blalock’s middleman minority theory has influenced other scholars who want to understand the challenges that ethnic minority groups are experiencing. Even though Blalock’s theory is based on studying the social classes of feudal society in the medieval world, which is very different from modern American society where Korean merchants find their social position, his insight regarding the socio-economic and political function of middleman minority group in a broader community is helpful for comprehending what Korean business owners experienced during the LA riots.

Another scholar who utilizes middleman minority theory for rigorously analyzing an ethnic group’s socio-economic and geo-political dynamics in a society is Edna Bonacich, a pioneer who directly applied the theory to the studies of Korean immigrants in America. Bonacich explains that “middleman minorities are entrepreneurial ethnic minorities who cluster in commercial occupations, especially in Third World societies.”<sup>117</sup> According to her, such minorities often play a role of “middleman” between producers

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<sup>115</sup> Ibid., 81.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid., 83-84.

<sup>117</sup> Ivan Light and Edna Bonacich, *Immigrant Entrepreneurs: Korean in Los Angeles 1965-1982* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1988), 17.

and consumers and between elites and masses. They are often “pushed out of desirable occupations and forced to make a living in marginal lines.”<sup>118</sup> Their foreign character enables them to be “objective” in dealing with anyone in a community, because they are free from existing social connections. At the same time, however, because of this lack of connections, they are exposed to the hostility of other classes, especially the hostility of the masses because of their direct contacts with them. Their customers often become the people with whom they experience severe conflicts.<sup>119</sup>

Bonacich emphasizes that middleman minorities are like “sojourners”<sup>120</sup> who stays in a host country temporarily instead of planning to “settle permanently.” Therefore when they make some money, they want to send it back to their homeland or save it instead of consuming it. They prefer to have jobs that do not require a long period of involvement. For them, to keep close affiliation with ethnic enclaves is more important than to build up long-term relationships with members of the hosting society. They are interested in establishing language and cultural institutions where their children can learn about their own cultural heritage and native language and maintain their ethnic uniqueness, like traditional foods and cultural traits. They are less likely to get involved in politics and the delicate affairs of the hosting community. “Sojourning is important in that it creates a preference for liquidity, encourage thrift, and fosters a solidarity community that is cooperative internally and ‘free’ to compete with the surrounding

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<sup>118</sup> Edna Bonacich, “A Theory of Middleman Minorities,” *American Sociological Review* Vol. 38, No. 5 (October 1973): 583.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 589-90.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, 584.

society.”<sup>121</sup> They often remain “strangers” who resist easy assimilation into the surrounding communities.<sup>122</sup>

The typical business for middleman minorities, according to Bonacich, is a family store, which inevitably requires other family members’ involvements as unpaid family workers. When they need to hire employees, they prefer to have someone with kin relationship. In this case, “the interests of employer and employee are not clearly distinct. Employers are paternalistic, employees willing to work long hours at low pay. The result is a cheap and loyal workforce.”<sup>123</sup> Middleman minorities often cluster around similar businesses and formulate “concentration and domination” in several fields of the market. This tendency of dominating often causes a conflict with existing merchants, often from subordinate groups,<sup>124</sup> who feel threatened by the “invasion” of middleman minorities.

In her latter writings, Bonacich clearly shows her awareness of the potentials and the limitations for applying middleman minority theory to an examination of Korean small businesses in America. The theory, according to Bonacich, provides several benefits by enabling us to understand: 1) “the problem of overrepresented ethnic minorities in business”; 2) “the ability of entrepreneurial subgroups to develop firms in unpromising economic contexts”; and 3) “the intergroup tensions that typically arise when alien business owners buffer elites and masses.” On the contrary, there are several

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<sup>121</sup> Ibid., 588.

<sup>122</sup> Some believe that middleman minorities’ refusal of integration into a broader society inevitably creates an image of cliquy and treacherous outsiders and this image assists in their segregation as scapegoats in times of stress. See, Pyong Gap Min and Andrew Kolodny, “The Middleman Minority Characteristics of Korean Immigrants in the United States,” in *Koreans in the Hood: Conflict with African Americans* (ed. Kwang Chung Kim; Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 131.

<sup>123</sup> Bonacich, “A Theory of Middleman Minorities,” 591.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid., 590.



restrictions: 1) the theory was developed in the context of the Third World, not in economically developed countries like the United States of America where Korean merchants operate their businesses; 2) while traditional societies despised the commercial activities and those who were involved in them, American society appreciates those activities and merchants. Therefore “the middleman minority theory offered no firm guidance to the American reality”; 3) because Koreans do not have “a tradition of wandering through the world as commercial middleman,” the theory may not provide a direct guidance to understand Korean merchants in America. Because of those constraints, Bonacich with her colleague prefers to use the term, “immigrant entrepreneurs” instead of “middleman minorities.”<sup>125</sup>

If Bonacich utilizes the concept of “middleman minority theory,” even if with a different term, “immigrant entrepreneurs,” for understanding Korean merchants’ lives and businesses in a broader spectrum, Pyong Gap Min, sometimes with his colleagues, employs it for his focused investigation of the conflicts and hostilities that Korean shopkeepers faced in New York City and Los Angeles. Despite his appreciation for Bonacich’s use of the theory for the studies of Korean merchants in the USA, Min clarifies his own position by criticizing Bonacich’s idea that middleman minorities are “sojourners” who temporarily reside in a host country and who eventually want to go back to their homeland. According to Min and Andrew Kolodny, Bonacich’s emphasis on middleman minorities as “sojourners” may give the impression that Jews or Chinese in the United States of America “entered small business *by choice* and thus obscure the reality that discrimination and disadvantage forced them to do so.” It also may convey the

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<sup>125</sup> Light and Bonacich, *Immigrant Entrepreneurs*, 17-18.

notion that Jewish and Asian minorities have achieved an economic success.<sup>126</sup> Min and his colleague emphasize that Korean immigrants' involvement in small businesses is not the result of their "sojourning" characteristic or of their voluntary choice but the result of combined factors like language barriers, lack of training in America, capital limitations, and discrimination in the "mainstream" job market, as fully described earlier.

Min also shows another difference from Bonacich's analysis in his evaluation of the impact of the conflict that middleman minorities have with other groups on its group solidarity. Bonacich believes that "discrimination and hostility against minorities usually have the effect of hurting group solidarity and pride, driving a group to the bottom rather than the middle of the social structure."<sup>127</sup> Min, on the contrary, argues that "Korean immigrants' middleman economic role has enhanced their ethnic solidarity."<sup>128</sup> Despite their disagreements in several aspects, Bonacich and Min are the scholars who show the effectiveness of using a middleman minority theory for understanding the social position of the Korean merchants in a broader society and the impact of the role they have played.

Before Korean merchants, as Min and Kolodny argue, many Jews played the role of middleman minority group by filling the gap between inner-city residents of African Americans, Hispanics and the dominant whites who usually control the economic systems of American society with political powers. "Black anti-Semitism has been due, in part, to the economic role that Jews have played in black neighborhoods."<sup>129</sup> Because of their vulnerable position as middleman minorities, Jews often became victims of

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<sup>126</sup> Min and Kolodny, "The Middleman Minority Characteristics," 133. Emphasis is original.

<sup>127</sup> Bonacich, "A Theory of Middleman Minorities," 584.

<sup>128</sup> Min, *Caught in the Middle*, 4.

<sup>129</sup> Min and Kolodny, "The Middleman Minority Characteristics," 132.

violence and boycotts in South Central area. Many Korean merchants have taken over the position once held by Jews in African American neighborhood in the same area. Koreans now play the role of middleman minorities who mediate between white suppliers and black consumers.

Min and Kolodny have proposed six characteristics of middleman minorities in the United States: “(1) a concentration in small business, (2) a focus on providing services to minority customers, (3) a dependence on U.S. corporations for supply of merchandise, (4) a strong ethnic cohesion, (5) a subjection to stereotyping, and (6) experiences of hostility from the host society.”<sup>130</sup> They argue that the Korean merchants’ role of filling the gap between the dominant white group and the inner-city low-income African American neighborhood is similar to that of the middleman minorities who bridged the status gap between elites and masses in the traditional societies. The unavoidable result of being a middleman minority group is to face conflicts with other groups, especially with their customers in African American neighborhood.

According to Min, in order to find the reasons for the Korean merchants’ frequent clashes with customers, it is necessary to pay close attention to “the location of major Korean businesses and the nature of their commercial activities.” He explains,

Many Korean immigrants run grocery, liquor, produce, and fish retail businesses, and these businesses are heavily concentrated in minority neighborhoods. Korean merchants rely mostly on White suppliers. Like the Jews in Europe, the Chinese in Southeast Asia, and the Indians in African countries. . . , Korean merchants in the United States play the role of a “middleman” minority between low-income, minority consumers and large companies, often distributing merchandise made by predominantly White-owned corporations to African American and Latino customers. In this economic role, Korean immigrants encounter a high level of business-related conflicts with both customers and White suppliers. Korean men and women engage in middleman businesses more than any other immigrant

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<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

group and thus are more likely to be involved in intergroup conflicts and to have developed collective strategies to protect their economic interests.<sup>131</sup>

Min emphasizes that the middleman minority role that the Korean merchants play between white suppliers and inner-city low-income African American customers is the main reason for their frequent conflicts with them. From this perspective, Korean shopkeepers' severe conflicts with their African American buyers, especially during the riots, is the inescapable outcome of their position as middleman minorities within the economic and political structure of American society.

As mentioned earlier, Blalock's insights about middleman minority group are helpful in understanding Korean merchants in Los Angeles. Blalock's explanation for the situation of middleman minority group at the time of unrest is particularly insightful: "During periods of stress, the middleman minority will serve as an ideal scapegoat to the degree that: (a) it is the apparent source of frustration; (b) it is politically unprotected and yet visible; (c) it appears similar to the elite group with respect to economic position and function."<sup>132</sup> As mentioned earlier, some African Americans could find the negative images of whites in the "deep South" in the behaviors of Korean shopkeepers in South Central Los Angeles. From the standpoint of African American residents in low-income inner-city neighborhood who were frustrated by their destitute economic situation, the Korean business owners would be seen as subordinate retailers of big companies often owned by whites. They could be regarded as "visible heralds" of invisible structures of an exploitative economy of a racist society. The consequence of being middleman minority

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<sup>131</sup> Min, *Caught in the Middle*, 3.

<sup>132</sup> Blalock, *Toward A Theory of Minority-Group Relations*, 84.

group at the time of stress like the Los Angeles riots becomes clear: being an easy target that serves as an “ideal scapegoat.”

Many believe that the Korean merchants became “scapegoats” for both white dominants and African American minorities. The African American residents of South Central who were outraged by the not-guilty verdict against four police officers charged with beating Rodney King burst out to the streets and poured their resentments on an easy target, nearby Korean small businesses operated by immigrants who did not have enough political power to protect themselves. Kwang Chung Kim and Shin Kim argue that the angry local African American residents tried to move into nearby “white residence,” like Beverly Hills and Westside. However those white resident areas were curtailed by police forces. As a result, the residents destroyed the unprotected not-white businesses, specifically those of Koreans in South Central and Koreatown.<sup>133</sup>

Shim also confirms that “[w]hile mostly racial minority-populated areas such as South Central, Pico Union, and Koreatown were deserted by the police, predominantly white communities like Beverly Hills, Santa Monica, and West Hollywood were well protected.”<sup>134</sup> According to those arguments, the Korean businesses were not only abandoned by police forces but also used as a “shield” to protect “white areas” from the anger of African Americans. As Blalock points out, Korean merchants as middleman minorities functioned in the role of “shock absorbers” who soaked up the anger of African Americans against white dominant social structures. The Korean merchants were

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<sup>133</sup> Kim and Kim, “The Multiracial Nature,” 25.

<sup>134</sup> Doobo Shim, “Toward Harmony between Korean and African Americans: Exploring the Origins of Korean American Merchant Behavior,” in *Socio-Cultural Conflict Between African American and Korean American* (ed. M. K. Asante and E. Min; New York: University Press of America, 2000), 170.

“politically unprotected and yet visible” targets of frustrated African Americans and as “faithful” middleman minorities they correctly (although involuntarily) functioned as “shock absorbers” for the safety and self-protection of the ruling powers.

In spite of the many similarities between the Korean merchants in modern America and middleman minorities in traditional societies, several differences need to be fully explained. First, the middleman minorities in the traditional societies are brought to the host society by the governing elite in order to distribute their merchandises to the masses. The Korean merchants, on the contrary, are immigrants who voluntarily decided to move into the United States, the host society, hoping to obtain more affluent lives and better educational environments for their children.

Second, typical middleman minorities “usually emanate from more deprived classes”<sup>135</sup> to small businessmen position in the host society. In this perspective, their social classes have been upgraded. However, the Korean merchants’ case is the opposite. Many Korean small business owners belonged to urban middle class who had white-collar occupations when they were in Korea. They have experienced “downward mobility” in the host community.

Third, while the traditional middleman minorities were totally subjected to the goodwill of the ruling elite because they were “hired” by them, the Korean merchants are relatively free from the influence of the dominant group; they often raise their own voices by collectively responding to suppliers, landlords, and government agencies for their own interests.<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> Bonacich, “A Theory of Middleman Minorities,” 588.

<sup>136</sup> For Korean merchants’ collective action to controlling powers, see Min, *Caught in the Middle*, 169-92.

Fourth, the traditional middleman minorities normally passed down their occupations over to next generations. The Korean merchants, however, often do not want their American-born children to take their small businesses in minority neighborhoods. In fact, the number of American-born Koreans who are self-employed in Los Angeles area is smaller than that of the native-born whites.<sup>137</sup> Just as Korean immigrants took upon themselves the middleman minority role that many Jews once played, so newer immigrants, not the Korean merchants' children, are likely to take over the middleman position that Korean business owners now have.

#### d. The Impacts of the Riots

The 1992 riots, *Sa-i-gu*, as the most striking event for the Korean society in the United States of America, had significant economic, psychological, structural impacts on the Korean immigrant community and caused many changes in it. First, Korean immigrants have become aware of the reality of their immigrant lives in the United States. The physical and economic damages that the Korean merchants experienced were relatively easily calculated after the riots. However, the psychological and emotional damages, which cannot be expressed in numbers or visual data, were imbedded in the hearts of Korean immigrants as scars.

Korean immigrants who arrived in the United States before the riots had a somewhat naïve “American dream.” They had somewhat rosy and ideal images of the American society where everybody is free and equal. They believed that if they worked hard, their efforts would be ultimately rewarded by financial success, which they often

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<sup>137</sup> Min and Kolodny, “The Middleman Minority Characteristics,” 150.

understood to mean that they would be rich and powerful enough to enjoy their lives and to raise their children as professionals who would take leadership positions in the mainstream of society. They believed in the essential American values, such as freedom, equality, and legal system.

However, as they observed their businesses being looted and burned to the ground without any intervention from the police or other government agencies, Korean merchants recognized that their American dream was unrealistic, a mirage, and that they could do nothing else but to accept the reality of immigrant lives. They gained a clear view of the “real” American life, where racism is active and quite powerful, indeed powerful enough to establish a racial hierarchy with whites on top. In this hierarchical system, they are put in a place where in their life they should compete with other immigrants and natives, not for luxury but for survival.

Second, they have begun to understand their position in the broader society as a middleman minority group. Not all Korean immigrants are merchants. However, significant portion of the Korean immigrant population is made up of self-employed small business owners, unpaid family workers, and employees. Korean shopkeepers are trapped in the middle of the socio-economic and geo-political structure that often requires their sacrifice by becoming “shock absorbers.” Korean merchants are necessary figures not only for African American customers who live in low-income inner-city neighborhoods and who need stores to shop, but also for white suppliers who are searching for people who are willing to take the “risky” job to deliver their products to “dangerous” communities in low-income minority neighborhoods. However, the inescapable consequences of being a middleman minority group -- such as being hated by



both the elite and the masses and being a shock absorber and scapegoat – are effects that fall on them and them alone.

Third, Korean immigrants have started to learn the importance of having political power to protect themselves. Korean merchants and their businesses became easy targets during the riots, because they did not have enough political power to prevent it. Even before the riots, several organizations such as the Korean American Coalition (KAC) brought the voices of the Korean immigrant community to the broader society. However, the riots have awaked Korean immigrants' political consciousness, a necessity in order to gain political empowerment. After the riots, numerous political organizations, such as the Korean American Legal Advocacy Foundation (KALAF),<sup>138</sup> were established in order to protect the human rights of Korean immigrants and their businesses from various attacks.

They also have learned how to make their voices heard by the public through selecting a representative. Chang Joon Kim, often known by his English name of Jay Kim, became the first Korean American congressman at the House of Representatives, elected by the 41<sup>st</sup> District in California. Koreans' awareness of political power led them to have more interests in local elections and policy changes; they became involved in supporting candidates through voting and fund-raising.

Fourth, Korean immigrants have paid more attentions to dialogue and mutual understanding with other ethnic groups, especially with the African American community. Even before the riots, the Black-Korean Alliance (BKA) existed to facilitate communication between Koreans and African Americans. However, the efforts of the

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<sup>138</sup> For a detailed list and presentation of the functions of organizations established after the riots, see Edward Chang, "Los Angeles Riots and Korean-African American Conflict," accessed November 9, 2010, <http://www.irwinator.com/126/wdoc204.htm>.

BKA were not enough to prevent the riots. In the aftermath of the riots, the leaders of the African and the Korean American communities organized a series of conferences and seminars, such as the two-day symposium named “Dialogue Between Black and Korean Americans in the Aftermath of the 1992 Los Angeles Riots,”<sup>139</sup> held May 22-23, 1992. Korean and African American scholars joined together for discussions and for writing books aimed at overcoming the prejudices and negative images each group had against the other by discovering common elements between African American and Korean communities.

For example, Eungjun Min ponders the *Blues* and *Haan*<sup>140</sup> as a fundamental communal emotion that Koreans and African Americans may share. According to Min, if African Americans have *blues*, Koreans have *Haan*. The *blues* could be understood as an “emotional expression including sorrow, anger and frustration sprung out of the slavery... The *blues* represents both subjective psychological state of depression and objective status of social oppression.”<sup>141</sup> According to West, even though he does not use the term “*blues*,” he explains what that emotion means, “The accumulated effect of the black wounds and scars suffered in a white-dominated society is a deep-seated anger, a boiling sense of rage, and a passionate pessimism regarding America’s will to justice.”<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>139</sup> For the contents of this conference, see Eui-Young Yu, ed., *Black-Korean Encounter: Toward Understanding and Alliance* (Los Angeles, CA: Institute for Asian Americans and Pacific Asian Studies, California State University, 1994).

<sup>140</sup> The term, *Haan* and *Han* are interchangeable.

<sup>141</sup> Eungjun Min, “Blues and Haan: Discourses of Despair and Lamentation of African American and Korean American: An Introduction,” in *Socio-Cultural Conflict Between African American and Korean American* (ed. M. K. Asante and E. Min; New York: University Press of America, 2000), 4.

<sup>142</sup> West, *Race Matters*, 28.

*Blues* are the accrued collective emotion of African Americans' anger, sorrow, and despair under the slavery and oppressive social systems since then.

According to Suh Nam-Dong, who laid the foundation of Korean *minjung* theology, *haan* is “an accumulation of suppressed and condensed experience of oppression.”<sup>143</sup> Andrew Sung Park defines *haan* as “the inexpressibly entangled experience of pain and bitterness imposed by the injustice of oppressors.”<sup>144</sup> *Haan* is, in my own understanding, a deeply repressed and accumulated emotion of sorrow, resentment, and helplessness, which has been inherited from generation to generation, under situations of oppression. Just as African Americans have suffered from brutal slavery and systematic discrimination and formulated *Blues* in their hearts, so Koreans who have been victimized by surrounding countries such as China and Japan come to have *haan*.<sup>145</sup>

The leaders of the Korean and African American communities have encouraged their own people to respect each other through mutual understanding. The riots have become a stimulating event for Koreans; because of the riots they began searching for strategies to enter into dialogue with other ethnic groups.

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<sup>143</sup> Suh Nam-dong, “Towards a Theology of Han,” in *Minjung Theology: People as the Subject of History* (ed. CTC-CCA; Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1981), 64.

<sup>144</sup> According to Andrew Sung Park, the term *han* “was a shamanistic term used to describe the unresolved entanglement of the dead, the bereft, and the down-and-out. Shamanism was the religion of the downtrodden, and its goal was to resolve their *han*.” Other Asian countries like China, Japan, and Vietnam also have the term, *han*. See, Andrew Sung Park, *Racial Conflict and Healing: An Asian-American Theological Perspective* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1996), 9-11.

<sup>145</sup> In recent history, Koreans suffered from the oppressive colonization by the Japanese for thirty-six years (1909-1945) during which thousands of Korean women were enslaved as “comfort woman.” “Comfort women” were sexual slaves for the Japanese soldiers who obtained a ticket for “comfort” by killing other human beings, their “enemies.” The scars of the comfort women on their physical bodies and minds became *haan* in their hearts.

Fifth, through the riots Korean immigrants and their children have become united. The riots have boosted ethnic awareness and solidarity among Korean Americans. It is commonly acknowledged that threats from outside often increase an internal solidarity among members of a group. Similar things happened among Korean Americans during and after the riots. On May 2, 1992 approximately 30,000 Koreans participated in peace rally held at the heart of Koreatown. Participants called for peace and racial harmony and criticized the lack of proper protection from the police. This rally was an historical event not only because the number of participants was so large -- it could be the largest Asian American gathering in American history -- but also because it created a unity among Koreans of different ages, social classes, sexes, and generations (such as the first generation, the 1.5 generation, and the second generation of Korean Americans).<sup>146</sup>

Sixth, the riots have heightened the identity and ethnic consciousness of the younger generation of Korean Americans. The targeted violence on Korean owned business and biased reports of the mass media on Korean merchants made Korean Americans visible as a distinctive ethnic minority, different from Japanese and Chinese. For the 1.5-generation and second-generation Korean Americans, the riots provided an opportunity to think about their deep connection with the first-generation Korean Americans, especially with their immigrant parents who were standing alone, helplessly in front of enormous violence. They began not only to understand the difficult situations of Korean immigrants who were operating a small business in the “abandoned”

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<sup>146</sup> Several terms have been used to identify Korean Americans. First-generation Korean Americans are Korean grownups who moved into America as immigrants and who use Korean as their primary language. 1.5-generation Korean Americans are those who came to America with their immigrant parents during their school years and who usually can speak both Korean and English. Second-generation Korean Americans are those who were born in America to Korean immigrants or to 1.5-generations; second generation Koreans often speak English with little Korean. Third-generation Korean Americans are children of second-generation Koreans.

neighborhoods in spite of the language barrier and of discrimination, but also to feel the pains of their parents who were exposed to physical violence, emotional humiliation, and restless daily hard work in order to support their education and comfortable lives.

The 1.5-generation and second-generation Korean Americans began to jump in the “dangerous arena” of immigrant life by throwing away the language differences and cultural gaps. Edward Lee, the only Korean who died in the cross fire, was one of the second-generation Koreans who volunteered to protect Korean businesses and lives from assaults. Younger-generation Korean Americans showed deep compassion for the first-generation Korean immigrants and decided to join in the process of restoring the “burned down American dream” and healing broken hearts. Through this process of participation, they have re-actualized their identity as Korean Americans and have become aware the ethnic roots which have shaped who they are.

Seventh, in the aftermath of the riots, the leadership of the Korean society has changed hands, from those of first-generation immigrants to those of younger-generation Korean Americans. American-educated young leaders, familiar with American culture and language, stood up to advocate for Korean immigrants by having interviews with major news network and newspapers and by defending Koreans’ position as representatives of Korean organizations. “The Korean-speaking community leaders who enjoyed virtually sole access to the leadership positions found themselves relying on the English-speaking Korean Americans,”<sup>147</sup> because they found that their communication ability was much less effective than that of the younger-generations. This leadership change reflects “the growing realization by first-generation Koreans after the riots that maintaining successful

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<sup>147</sup> Su Yon Pak et al., *Singing the Lord’s Song in a New Land: Korean American Practices of Faith* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2005), 12.

public relations with the mainstream media, government agencies, and other American organizations is important for protecting their group interests.”<sup>148</sup> The riots have become a turning point in which the leadership of the Korean community shifted from first-generations to 1.5-and second-generations and from Korean speaking to English speaking, a part of natural process of adjustment.

## Conclusion

Through my examinations of the first and third Korean immigration waves into the United States and of the 1992 Los Angeles riots, I have found that Koreans in American society show some characteristics. First, they have urban backgrounds and prefer to live in big cities. Los Angeles among many other large cities has been the first choice for Korean immigrants to settle down and became the central location for them. However, the most tragic incident for them happened at the heart of their most preferred city. Second, they often remain strangers caught in-between two groups, whites and blacks, and in-between two distinctive worlds, Korea and America. They are partly linked to both Korean and American cultures but not wholly assimilated with either of the two. In-betweenness is their existential reality.

Third, various obstacles such as language barrier, lack of training in America, foreign background, inability to transfer their professional knowledge and skills into the American job market, and exclusion from mainstream occupations pushed them to a peripheral place, like the low-income high-crime inner-city neighborhoods where they play a role of middleman minority group between white suppliers and black customers.

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<sup>148</sup> Min, *Caught in the Middle*, 164.

Marginality is their socio-economic location in the broader society and it has been the reason for the various conflicts and sufferings that afflicted them, particularly during the 1992 riots. Fourth, Korean immigrants are deeply connected to their ethnic churches. The ethnic church has been the foremost social organization that provides various services for them. Koreans come to the church for religious, psychological, and social needs and their active participation and reinterpretation of their struggling lives through religious meditation frequently help them maintain their everyday lives.

Despite its positive contributions to Korean societies in America, the Korean ethnic church also faces criticism for not providing the new visions that Korean Americans needed and not playing an effective leadership role for positive changes in the Korean American community. Edward T. Chang formulates the following sharp criticisms:

Can churches provide this much needed leadership? Can they offer new visions and function as agents for social and political change in the Korean American community? As the most important and influential institutions, they have the duty to meet the needs of the constituencies they serve. Unfortunately, the renewed sense of social activism for Korean American churches has not translated into concrete actions. Except in few isolated cases, most Korean American churches went back into their “comfort zone” of providing emotional and psychological healing, individual salvation, and/or working to increase attendance in their own congregations. The disengagement of Korean American churches from community issues has had a detrimental impact on the Korean American community at large. Although Korean American churches have played many positive roles for recent Korean immigrants, they failed to provide leadership and concrete action plans to empower the Korean American community. If the Korean American churches continue to absorb human and financial resources without giving them back to the community, the future prospects of the Korean American community look very gloomy at best.<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>149</sup> Edward Taehan Chang, “The Post-Los Angeles Riot Korean American Community: Challenges and Prospects,” in *Korean and Korean American Studies Bulletin* (Vol. 10, Nos. 1 & 2, 1999): 22-23.

Los Angeles Riots and Korean-African American Conflict.”

Chang's critique of the ethnic church cannot be easily ignored, because it points out the fundamental weakness of the church. As Min admits, "Korean churches have been criticized for paying little attention to social issues affecting the whole Korean community."<sup>150</sup> During and after the riots, it was the time when the church's leadership as the most significant social organization for Korean communities in America was desperately needed. However, as Chang argues, it remained within its comfort zone by offering limited assistance to the wounded Korean Americans. It was the various non-governmental organization (NGO) groups that provided the most needed services such as legal, financial, and psychological supports. These NGOs often delivered the voices of Korean Americans to the broader society through interviews and writings and represented Koreans' interests and concerns in public arena.<sup>151</sup> By doing so, they took the leadership position among Korean Americans and offered new visions for the future of Korean Americans in the United States.

Why did the Korean ethnic church fail to play a pivotal role of leadership, when it was urgently needed during and after the riots? Why did the ethnic church stay within its comfort zone and did not propose new visions for Korean societies in America? Do they lack the vision of God's new world? I hope to bring those questions to my reading of Paul's letter to the Galatians focusing on how Paul tried to establish God's new world through the assembly of Gentile believers, the *ekklēsia* in the midst of the Roman Empire.

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<sup>150</sup> Min, *Caught in the Middle*, 162.

<sup>151</sup> For the active roles of NGO leaders after the riots, see *Ibid.*, 162-68.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### (NEW) CREATION IN ROMANS 8 AND 2 CORINTHIANS 5

In the previous chapter, I have presented the situations of Korean immigrants in the United States who came to America with a dream of a new world. The new world that many Korean immigrants had dreamed was not something they could obtain easily by just stepping on American soil but something they should envision and endeavor to establish in their struggling everyday lives. In this chapter, I hope to inquire into Paul's understanding of God's new world demonstrated in Paul's (new) creation passages such as Romans 8:18-25 and 2 Corinthians 5:17. Through my interpretation of these passages I hope to argue that *κτίσις* (creation) in Romans 8 refers to a holistic community of human beings and non-human creatures, through which they are united to resist to destructive and oppressive powers. In 2 Corinthians 5, "being in Christ" is a condition for believers to participate in God's eschatological new world, new creation. This will be the interpretation that I hope to choose from my own life context of Korean immigrant believers in America who are envisioning God's new world despite struggles in their lives and dreaming about a better and more livable society through their Christian belief.

#### 1. "Creation" in Romans 8:18-25

There is nothing like "pure and value-neutral translation," because translating requires a careful process of selecting specific words and/or phrases, which results from an interpreter's theological and hermeneutical perspective. As a believer who grew up on

Korean soil and later became a preacher in a local Korean church in Los Angeles, California, I have inherited various characteristics of Korean culture. One of the characteristics of Korean culture is being community-centered. Korean immigrants often maintain this communal aspect of life, which is manifested in the fact that many Korean small businesses are often owned and run by family members and/or relatives. This kin-centered mentality has been intensified by Neo-Confucian teaching of the holistic combination of “*yin*” and “*yang*” in nature and society.<sup>1</sup> Communal and holistic mentality, therefore, has partly shaped the theological and hermeneutical viewpoint of many Korean immigrant believers in the United States.

#### A. Dominant Understanding of κτίσις

Scholars have suggested several possible meanings for “creation” (κτίσις) in Rom 8:18-25.<sup>2</sup> Edward Adams lists three possibilities: “(1) *ktisis* as unbelieving human world; (2) *ktisis* as unbelievers and non-human creation; (3) *ktisis* as non-human creation.”

Among those three possible interpretations, according to Adam’s explanation, the dominant scholarly support went to the third option: “in recent interpretation, a consensus

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<sup>1</sup> Neo-Confucianism was the ruling philosophy of the *Chosun* dynasty (1392-1897), which had shaped traditional Korean culture and unique mentality of Koreans. One of the main teachings of Neo-Confucianism was the holistic combination of “*yin and yang*” in nature and society. According to it, nature is a combination of two different elements such as light (*yang*) and darkness (*yin*); day and night; good and evil; and hot and cold. Like nature, human society is also consisted of the combinations of two elements: men and women; parents and children; kings and servants; teachers and students etc.

<sup>2</sup> “<sup>18</sup>I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us. <sup>19</sup>For the creation (κτίσις) waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; <sup>20</sup>for the creation (κτίσις) was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope <sup>21</sup>that the creation (κτίσις) itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. <sup>22</sup>We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labour pains (συνωδίνω) until now; <sup>23</sup>and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits (ἀπαρχήν) of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. <sup>24</sup>For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? <sup>25</sup>But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience” (NRSV).

has emerged favouring the last meaning.”<sup>3</sup> “Non-human creation” has become a major option in apprehending Paul’s creation in contemporary Pauline scholarship.

My own reading of academic writings suggests similar conclusions. Scholarly comprehension of the meaning of κτίσις could be categorized into three groups: The first group argues that κτίσις refers to sub-human creation. C. E. B. Cranfield, for example, explains that κτίσις refers to “the sum-total of sub-human nature both animate and inanimate.”<sup>4</sup> The second group, including scholars like Adolf Schlatter who pays attention to the personifying verbs such as “eager longing” and “to await expectantly,”<sup>5</sup> asserts that κτίσις is a collective concept, humanity. The third group believes that κτίσις indicates both human and non-human creations. Ernst Käsemann who emphasizes a cosmic dimension of life argues that κτίσις is not exclusively either non-human or human creation but inclusively both non-human and human, because there is no sharp distinction between them.<sup>6</sup> Regarding these verses, Susan G. Eastman, building upon Käsemann’s eschatological interpretation of Paul and the apocalyptic background of Rom 8, asserts, “it seems wisest to see in Paul’s three-fold use of *ktisis* in Rom 8:19-22 an inclusion of all creation and all unbelieving humanity.”<sup>7</sup> Despite strong challenges from the “apocalyptic”

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<sup>3</sup> Edward Adams, *Constructing the World: A Study in Paul’s Cosmological Language* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2000), 176. For more details of various interpretations of Paul’s κτίσις, see James D. G. Dunn, *The Epistle to the Romans* (ICC; vol. 1; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1975), 411-12.

<sup>4</sup> C. E. B. Cranfield, *Romans: A Shorter Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1985), 194.

<sup>5</sup> Adolf Schlatter, *Romans: The Righteousness of God* (trans. Siegfried Schatzmann; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1995), 184-5.

<sup>6</sup> Ernst Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans* (trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley; Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1980), 233.

<sup>7</sup> Susan G. Eastman, “Whose Apocalypse? The Identity of the Son of God in Romans 8:19,” *JBL* 121/2 (2002): 276.

interpretation, the first option (κτίσις refers to sub-human creation) has gained the largest supports from commentators.

Although many critics prefer the dominant reading of κτίσις as “non-human creation,” this interpretation generates several problems. First, it emphasizes the separation between humanity and non-human creation. Cranfield, one of the scholars who ardently support the dominant idea, provides a representative commentary on the expression in Rom 8:20, “for the creation was subjected to futility”(τῇ γὰρ ματαιότητι ἡ κτίσις ὑπετάγη). He thinks that the expression refers to a particular event and the passive tense, “was subjected to,” denotes God’s action as a “divine passive.” Cranfield comments: “There is little doubt that Paul had in mind the judgment related in Gen 3.17-19.”<sup>8</sup> According to him, the non-human creation is cursed by God’s punishment instigated by Adam’s disobedience. Creation’s groaning under the slavery/bondage of corruption is, therefore, a manifestation of its punished situation. Adam’s defiance has become the direct reason for the severe pains suffering by the created world as a result of God’s divine judgment on them. Consequently, in this interpretation, there is a big gap between humanity and non-human creation.

Second, this envisioned gap between human beings and non-human creation establishes a certain hierarchical relationship between them, with the latter totally dependent on the former. Laurie Braaten, who investigates various Hebrew Bible passages that mention the groaning of creation, argues that human wrong-doings are connected with creation’s suffering; human transgression causes God’s wrath and punishment, resulting in the severe suffering to sub-human nature. Conversely, if human

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<sup>8</sup> Cranfield, *Romans*, 196.

beings repent, God's penalty will stop and the suffering of sub-human creatures will also be over.<sup>9</sup> In this perspective, the fate of non-human creation is totally dependent on human beings' behavior.

This total dependence of non-human nature on humanity creates and espouses a hierarchical relationship: the superiority of humans over non-human creation. Human beings' behavior, as "superior" creatures, determines the status of the "inferior" sub-human creatures. However, since Lynn White Jr.'s article, "The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis," the idea of "humanity's superiority over nature" has been accused as giving an "indulgence" for human beings' exploitation of natural resources. Christianity often gets blamed as a religion that condones this kind of exploitation of natural resources because it emphasizes the superiority of humanity over non-human creation.<sup>10</sup> The dominant understanding of κτίσις in Rom 8:18-25 firmly supports this problematic understanding of the hierarchical relationship between humanity and other creatures and can overlook human abuses of nature.

Third, the dominant interpretation can easily lead to the condemnation of those who are in painful conditions, such as natural disasters and severe suffering. The opinion that creation's suffering is a representation of God's punishment can misguide people into believing that people who are suffering from painful conditions such as being hit by earthquake and tsunami, fighting against incurable diseases, undergoing severe hunger, and living under the control of a merciless dictator are experiencing God's punishment

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<sup>9</sup> Laurie J. Braaten, "The Groaning Creation: The Biblical Background for Romans 8:22," *Biblical Research* Vol. L (2005): 19-39.

<sup>10</sup> It is often believed that the climax of God's creation described in Genesis 1 is the creation of human beings on the sixth day. The other created things created from the first day to fifth such as dry land and sea, the plants and the animals on land, in the sky and sea are carefully designed environments prepared for the best living condition for humanity.

against them,<sup>11</sup> for instance because of their faults before God such as idolatry and honoring their political leader instead of glorifying God. Indeed, Christians too often connect a painful situation like physical disability with sin, viewing the disability as a divine punishment for the sin someone has committed.<sup>12</sup> In this way, this type of understanding of Romans 8:18-25, dominant as it is, can victimize (and actually does victimize) those who are suffering from uncontrollable pains and cruel situations by maintaining the old misconception that suffering is a divine punishment.

From the perspective of these three problems, it becomes clear that the dominant interpretation can be and often is hurtful not only for those who are suffering from many painful situations and waiting eagerly for God's redemption in their lives, but also for the harmonious relationship between humanity and other created things. These problems show that it is necessary to investigate whether this interpretation is the only legitimate and plausible one; hopefully it is possible to pursue an alternative interpretation of *κρίσις* in such a way that we, the readers, can understand not only Paul's text in a different, but no less rigorous way, but also the relationship between humanity and non-human creation

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<sup>11</sup> A conservative radio host, Glen Beck, argues that the earthquake and tsunami that hit the eastern part of Japan on March 11, 2011 were a "message" sent by God. He said, "'I'm not saying God is, you know, causing earthquakes -- well I'm not not saying that either!' What God does is God's business, I have no idea. But I'll tell you this -- whether you call it Gaia or whether you call it Jesus, there's a message being sent.'" See, <http://abcnews.go.com/Entertainment/glenn-beck-calls-japan-quake-message-god-gilbert/story?id=13139648>

<sup>12</sup> According to Beavis' research, in the Greco-Roman literature, physical disability like blindness is depicted as a divine punishment. See Mary Ann Beavis, "From the Margin to the Way: A Feminist Reading of the Story of Bartimaeus," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 14 (1998): 19-39. The Gospel of John shows that many people at the time of Jesus believed that being blind was a result of someone's sin; in other words, blindness was a divine punishment. When Jesus' disciples saw a man blind from birth, they asked Jesus, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" (John 9:1-2, NRSV). The Pharisees rebuked the blind man from birth who regained his sight, "You were born entirely in sins" (John 9:34, NRSV). See also Nancy Eiesland, *The Disabled God: Toward A Liberatory Theology of Disability* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1994).

in a more plausible way – an understanding of this relationship such that God’s love and justice might be actualized for those who are crying for help in desperate conditions. The hurtful impacts of the dominant understanding of Paul’s κτίσις and the situations of Korean immigrants suffering from the hierarchical American social system should lead us as readers to seek an alternative interpretation.

## B. Literary Backgrounds of Several Key Words

In order to envision an alternative reading of κτίσις, it is necessary to re-read the text while considering the literary backgrounds of several key words used in Rom 8:18-25. In the text, Paul talks about the “heirs of God” (κληρονόμοι μὲν θεοῦ) who are experiencing the present suffering and anticipating the future glory that will be bestowed on them through Christ (vv. 17-18). The creation is “eagerly waiting for the revelation of the sons of God” (τὴν ἀποκάλυψιν τῶν υἱῶν τοῦ θεοῦ ἀπεκδέχεται, v. 19). “We” are also eagerly “waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body” (υἰοθεσίαν ἀπεκδεχόμενοι, τὴν ἀπολύτρωσιν τοῦ σώματος ἡμῶν, v. 23), which will happen in the future.

These verses are talking about something related to the future that we believers are waiting for, a change that the creation is also eagerly waiting for. As J. Mark Lawson explains, those expressions are “consistent with the eschatology spelled out in other epistles of the Pauline corpus.”<sup>13</sup> The expression “first fruits (ἀπαρχὴν)” in v. 23 is related to “first fruits (ἀπαρχή)” in 1 Cor 15:20 where Paul is using this term to present Christ's resurrection as a part of the universal event that includes resurrection of the body of those who have died, which will happen at the end of the age.

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<sup>13</sup> J. Mark Lawson, “Romans 8:18-25 – The Hope of Creation,” *Review and Expositor* 91 (1994): 563.

Furthermore, the verb, συνωδίνω in v. 22, is deeply connected to the eschatological change of the world. Paul uses the verb ὠδίνω (without the prefix συν) only twice in all his letters (Gal 4:19 and 27). In Gal 4:19, Paul describes his own labor like a mother who is in the pain of childbirth for the transformation of the Galatian believers. Paul's effort for the change and reshaping of his spiritual children, the Galatians, is like that of a mother in childbirth. In Gal 4:27, Paul uses the verb in his quotation from Isa 54:1 where a barren woman's desolate situation is described. However, in Isa 54:1, the prophet has brought the promise of God that the miserable situation of a barren woman will be changed by the miraculous power of God; she will be the mother of countless children. This promise has been achieved in Isa 66 as a part of God's creative work for a "new heaven" and a "new earth."

We can therefore conclude that Rom 8:18-25 conveys an eschatological teaching through Paul's usage of the words ἀπαρχὴν and συνωδίνω, an interpretation which is supported by the use of these terms in other letters like 1 Corinthians and Galatians. It is therefore possible to argue that Rom 8:18-25 carries an eschatological sense with cosmological implications.

### C. Alternative Understanding of κτίσις

Following the recognition that ἀπαρχὴν and συνωδίνω have eschatological connotations, we can begin to envision an understanding of κτίσις and of the creation's suffering that will be quite different from Cranfield's interpretation. We can begin by paying close attention to Paul's careful use of the prefix συν, which means "together." He utilizes it twice in v. 22: οἶδαμεν γὰρ ὅτι πάντα ἢ κτίσις συστενάζει καὶ συνωδίνει ἄχρι



τοῦ νῦν. The translation of this verse could be, “We know that all creation is groaning *together* and suffering in labor pains *together* until now.”<sup>14</sup> In scholarly discussion, the two verbs, στενάζει and συνωδίνει are often understood as forming a hendiadys – that is, the two words are interconnected and point to a single idea. The two words therefore can be translated, “groaning in labor pains” as it has been translated in the NRSV.

The two verbs, however, should be understood independently from each other not only because Paul uses each verb without prefix separately, στενάζω in 2 Cor 5:2 and 4 and ὠδίνω in Gal 4:19 and 27 as described above, but also because he intentionally adds the prefix συν to them. Paul’s use of the preposition συν led some scholars like Robert Jewett to see the deep connection between human and non-human creation as a one community. Jewett explains, “In Paul’s formulation ‘together’ refers to the shared experience of believers and the creation as a whole...Paul views the creation as a holistic, interdependent system.”<sup>15</sup> John G. Gibbs also clarifies the solidarity between humanity and non-human creation: “one cannot rightly speak of creation without speaking of man, nor rightly speak of man without speaking of the world in which he lives.”<sup>16</sup> Paul’s calculated use of the prefix συν and his emphasis by utilizing it twice should be regarded as evidence for the argument that κτίσις does not refer to the gap between human and non-human creatures or to any hierarchical relationship of superior and inferior between them. Rather, κτίσις refers to both human and non-human creation as a holistic community, which is “groaning *together* and suffering in labor pains *together*.”

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<sup>14</sup> Bible translations are mine, if not otherwise noted.

<sup>15</sup> Robert Jewett, *Romans* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 517.

<sup>16</sup> John G. Gibbs, *Creation and Redemption* (Leiden, Netherlands: E. J. Brill, 1971), 40-41.

#### D. Implications of “Groaning Together” and “Suffering in Labor Pains Together”

Some scholars like Käsemann and Luzia Rehman want to see Romans 8:22 from an apocalyptic perspective and emphasize the eschatological presence of God’s redemptive power in the midst of the current suffering. For Käsemann, Paul’s expression, “until now” in verse 22 is an “eschatological moment,” in which God’s ultimate salvation by defeating the forces of the current world is beginning.<sup>17</sup> In a similar position, Rehman argues that Paul uses the metaphor of a groaning woman to describe the whole creation’s situation and to explain the apocalyptic hope for the beginning of a new world.<sup>18</sup>

These scholars’ explanations are helpful not only in understanding the existence of evil powers that enslave all creation under the bondage of captivity, but also in perceiving the presence of God’s intervention in the midst of painful situations for whole creation. Aided by their insights, I hope to argue in favor of two implications of Paul’s expression, the “whole creation is groaning together and suffering in labor pains together until now” in Romans 8:22.

First, the expression, “groaning together” can be understood as an action of resistance against oppressive powers and a passionate request for change and redemption. In Exodus 2:23, the Israelites who suffer under the exploitative social structure of Egyptian empire are “groaning” and crying to God because of their overwhelming workload and cruel treatment by Egyptians. Their groaning is a manifestation of their

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<sup>17</sup> Ernst Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans* (Trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley; Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1980), 235-38.

<sup>18</sup> Luzia Sutter Rehman, “To Turn the Groaning into Labor: Romans 8.22-23,” in *Feminist Companion to Paul* (ed. Amy-Jill Levine; Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2004), 74-84.

reaction to the brutality that they endured in the slavery system of the Egyptian Empire. Their cries come up to God (Exo 2:23b) and God hears them (Exo 2:24; 3:7). Eventually, their desperate crying for help evokes God's compassion, as a result, God says to Moses that God will come down to deliver them from the hands of Egyptians (Exo 3:8). Similar to how the Israelite cry to God for redemption from the depressing system of the Egyptian Empire, the whole creation is resisting destructive powers such as the exploitative economic system of the Roman Empire and asking for God's salvation from the oppression by groaning together.

Second, the expression, "suffering in labor pains together" implies the coming of God's eschatological new world. In the Hebrew Bible, the image of women's labor pain is often associated with God's imminent judgment not only for Israelites but also for other nations.<sup>19</sup> For example, in Isaiah 13:8, a prophet proclaims God's impending judgment against Babylon: "Pangs and agony will seize them; they will be in anguish like a woman in labor. They will look aghast at one another; their faces will be aflame" (NRSV). The same image of labor pain is, however, also used as a sign for God's imminent redemption and change.<sup>20</sup> For example, in Micah 4:10, a prophet says, "Writhe and groan, O daughter Zion, like a woman in labor; for now you shall go forth from the city and camp in the open country; you shall go to Babylon. There you shall be rescued, there the LORD will redeem you from the hands of your enemies" (NRSV). Here, God

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<sup>19</sup> David Schnasa Jacobsen, *Preaching in the New Creation* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999), 99-104.

<sup>20</sup> Sylvia C. Keesmaat, *Paul and his Story: (Re)Interpretation the Exodus Tradition* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 102-114.

promises salvation for the Israelites in the form of God's immediate rescue from the hands of their adversaries.

If the dominant interpretation of κτίσις focuses on the negative side of the image; as a sign of God's judgment and punishment, the alternative understanding emphasizes the positive aspect of the image as a sign of God's redemption and establishment of a new world. Beverly Gaventa correctly elucidates that "birth pains serve as a metaphor for the period of strife and travail that ushers in a new age."<sup>21</sup> Paul's mentioning of the Holy Spirit's groaning and intercession for human beings as a part of whole creation in Rom 8:26 support the positive aspect of the image. The groaning of the Spirit assists the believers to overcome their weakness. In this perspective, the labor pains of the whole creation imply that God's redeeming intervention into the present situation is imminent. His intervention will be the creation of a new cosmic order through which all creation including human and non-human creatures can be free from their "bondage to decay" and "obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God" (v. 21).

## Conclusion

This alternative interpretation of κτίσις is helpful, because it shows that the term can refer to a holistic community, consisting human beings and non-human creatures. This is helpful for Korean immigrants who are familiar with a communal and holistic understanding of nature and world. Human and non-human creations are groaning under the bondage of corruption and the destructive powers that enslave them. Human beings are not superior to other created things because there is no hierarchical order between

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<sup>21</sup> Beverly Roberts Gaventa, "Romans," in *The Women's Bible Commentary* (ed. Carol A. Newsom and Sharon H. Ringe; Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1992), 318.

them. Paul's rejection of human superiority over non-human creatures is a helpful insight for Korean immigrants who are suffering in the hierarchical structure of American society, where they are frequently treated as "inferior" to the dominant white group. It is harmful to regard those who are suffering from painful situations as ones undergoing divine punishment because Korean immigrants (and other immigrants) are often going through agonizing circumstances not because they are being punished by God. Just as the whole creation is resisting the evil powers and anticipating God's redemptive intervention by "groaning together" and "suffering in labor pains together," so Korean immigrants are "groaning together" and "suffering together" in order to envision and participate in establishing God's new world, a more just and livable society on American soil.

## 2. "New Creation" in 2 Corinthians 5:17

The most debated issue in understanding 2 Cor 5:17 is how to translate the first half of the verse: εἴ τις ἐν Χριστῷ, καινὴ κτίσις. The majority of English Bible versions translate this expression into either "if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation"<sup>22</sup> or "he is a new creature."<sup>23</sup> On the other hand, NRSV and NJB have a slightly different translation; "if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation." Interestingly NAB puts the two phrases together: "So whoever is in Christ is a new creation." Scholars have more diverse translations. Many of them are following the popular translations of the English

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<sup>22</sup> See ESV, NKJ, NIB, NJB, NIV, and RSV.

<sup>23</sup> See ASV, KJV, and NAS. Vulgate also has *nova creatura* (new creature).

Bible: “he is a new creation,”<sup>24</sup> “he is a new creature,”<sup>25</sup> or “there is (a) new creation.”<sup>26</sup>

Others propose their own translations.<sup>27</sup> The translation of *καινή κτίσις* often shows a critic’s interpretive choice based on his/her particular viewpoint.

It is quite obvious that Paul does not use any word in front of *καινή κτίσις*.

Therefore if an interpreter puts anything like a subject, a verb, an adjective, a preposition, or an article in his/her translation of the expression, this reflects the interpreter’s particular perspective, which dominates the comprehension of the verse and the whole passage. I propose to translate the phrase: “if anyone is in Christ, new creation,” without

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<sup>24</sup> Scott J. Hafemann, *2 Corinthians* (The NIV Application Commentary Series; Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 2000), 243; Charles H. Talbert, *Reading Corinthians: A Literary and Theological Commentary* (2d ed.; Macon, Georgia: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, 2002), 199; David J. Valleskey, *2 Corinthians* (People’s Bible Commentary; St. Louis, MO.: Concordia Publishing House, 1992), 90.

<sup>25</sup> Philip E. Hughes, *Paul’s Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1962), 201. James Denney, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (The Expositor’s Bible; New York: A. C. Armstrong and Son, 1903), 198; David E. Garland, *2 Corinthians* (NAC 29; Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 268; Richard T. Mead, “Exegesis of 2 Corinthians 5:14-21,” in *Interpreting 2 Corinthians 5:14-21: An Exercise in Hermeneutics* (ed. Jack P. Lewis; Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1989), 143. Lightfoot, in his commentary on Galatians, translates *καινή κτίσις* into “a new creature” and argues that this expression is “a common expression in Jewish writers for one brought to the knowledge of the true God.” Joseph B. Lightfoot, *The Epistle of St. Paul to the Galatians* (2d ed.; Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1957), 224.

<sup>26</sup> Adams, *Constructing the World*, Adams, 234; Ralph P. Martin *2 Corinthians* (WBC 40; Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1986), 135; Simon J. Kistemaker, *Exposition of the Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (NTC; Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1997), 192; Paul Barnett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1997), 297; Victor Paul Furnish, *II Corinthians* (AB 32A; Garden city, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1984), 306; and Frank Stagg, “Exegesis of 2 Corinthians 5:14-21,” in *Interpreting 2 Corinthians 5:14-21: An Exercise in Hermeneutics* (ed. Jack P. Lewis; Lewiston, NY: E. Mellen Press, 1989), 163.

<sup>27</sup> Lambrecht has “that person is a new creation, a newly-created person.” Jan Lambrecht, *Second Corinthians* (Sacra Pagina Vol. 8: Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1999), 96. Danker has “if anyone-in-Christ—new creation.” Frederick W. Danker, “Exegesis of 2 Corinthians 5:14-21,” in *Interpreting 2 Corinthians 5:14-21: An Exercise in Hermeneutics* (ed. Jack P. Lewis; Lewiston, NY: E. Mellen Press, 1989), 116; Matera has “such a one is a new creation.” Frank J. Matera, *II Corinthians* (New Testament Library; Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), 128; Sampley has “he or she is a new creation.” J. Paul Sampley, *The Second Letter to the Corinthians* (NIB XI; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000), 93; and Thrall has “if anyone exists in Christ, that person is a newly-created being.” Margaret E. Thrall, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (ICC Vol. 1; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994), 427.

putting any word before the term, new creation. The reason for this translation will be explained in following sections.

#### A. Various Understandings of “In Christ”

Understanding the expression, εἰ τις ἐν Χριστῷ is an important step in obtaining the meaning of καινή κτίσις because it functions as a conditional clause for it. Scholarly efforts to apprehend the meaning of the phrase “in Christ” do not show any consensus but present various options.<sup>28</sup> Among them, three approaches have gained academic supports from many critics: 1) Personal union with Christ; 2) Living in the sphere of Christ; and 3) Ecclesiological unity.

The first group favors an understanding that the expression “in Christ” refers to an individual believer’s union with Christ. Oscar Cullmann in his explanation of baptism, which can be regarded as an explicit expression of “being in Christ,” argues that a believer “*is really set within the Body of Christ.*”<sup>29</sup> Terrance Callan, in a similar line of thought, argues that for Paul “the unity of believers with Christ...is to say that they are incorporated into Christ, that they become part of the body of Christ.”<sup>30</sup> According to these scholars, “being in Christ” is a believer’s status of being incorporated into Christ. This union, however, is not a fusion where the distinctive characters of participants are

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<sup>28</sup> Thrall summarizes academic debates on the meaning of “in Christ” into four categories. According to her explanation, “in Christ” refers to: 1) “Belonging to Christ by faith”; 2) “Being in Christ’s sphere of power”; 3) “Personal unity of the believer with Christ”; and 4) “Becoming incorporated through baptism into the community which is the body of Christ.” *Ibid.*, 425. For more details, see A. J. M. Wedderburn, “Some Observations on Paul’s Use of the Phrases ‘in Christ’ and ‘with Christ,’” *JSNT* 25 (1985): 83-97.

<sup>29</sup> Oscar Cullman, *Baptism in the New Testament* (trans. J. K. S. Reid; London: SCM Press, 1950), 31.

<sup>30</sup> Terrance Callan, *Dying and Rising with Christ: The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (New York: Paulist Press, 2006), 128.

being melted away, but “a union in which Christ and the Christian remain distinguishable persons yet so bound up in dying and living together that they are inseparable.”<sup>31</sup> This understanding of “union with Christ” stresses a personal and individualistic relationship with Christ, in which he or she becomes genuinely united with Christ.

The second group believes that being-in-Christ refers to living in a place, which is filled with the divine power of Christ. J. Christian Beker explains a life in Christ as a “life in a new epoch and a new domain.” According to him, the expression “in Christ” should not be understood “mystically or individualistically” because it has “a participatory-instrumental meaning and signifies the transfer to the new age that has been inaugurated with the death and resurrection of Christ.”<sup>32</sup> Leander E. Keck explains that being baptized into Christ is “the ‘objective’ transference into a domain of power.” In Keck’s understanding, “To be baptized into Christ is to be included in the domain of Christ, his field of force.”<sup>33</sup> Alfred Wikenhauser also argues, “Paul uses the phrase, ‘in Christ’ to express his conviction that the Christian lives on a plane where his entire life is profoundly influenced by a divine power, and where to some degree the very quality of his life has been changed.” In this respect, being-in-Christ is to enter a realm where the divine power of Christ is everywhere and, as a result, those who are in it should live under the absolute influence of his power.

The third group elucidates the communal aspect of the phrase by emphasizing becoming a part of the believing community, the *ekklēsia*. For them, being-in-Christ

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<sup>31</sup> Stagg, “Exegesis of 2 Corinthians 5:14-21,” 173.

<sup>32</sup> J. Christian Beker, *Paul The Apostle: The Triumph of God in Life and Thought* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), 272.

<sup>33</sup> Leander E. Keck, *Paul and His Letters* (Proclamation Commentaries, 2d ed. ; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), 56.



often denotes “being baptized” in the church, which is an “official” way to be a member of it. In his explanation of the “Christ-mysticism,” C.H. Dodd argues, “Paul’s sense of union with Christ is conditioned by the experience of life in a society controlled by His Spirit.” Dodd continues, “To be in Christ does not depend on states of abstraction or ecstasy . . . . It depends on active fellowship with others who are also ‘members of Christ.’”<sup>34</sup> Behind this perspective, there is a strong belief that the church as a sacred community of believers is a body of Christ. As a result, “to be in Christ” refers to belonging to a believing community and, at the same time, the image draws an exclusive boundary line between those who are inside of “the body of Christ” and outside of it.

Yung Suk Kim who has developed the idea that being-in-Christ is to be in the sphere of Christ, recently proposes to read “in Christ” as a modal relation. Kim critiques the dominant approaches, because, in his judgment, they regard the phrase “in Christ” as an exclusive boundary marker, which often eliminates a genuine engagement with others, particularly those who are outside of the community and neglects the diversity in it. He believes that “in Christ” refers to “a way of life manifested in and associated with Christ’s life and sacrifice.”<sup>35</sup> For him, by being-in-Christ is equivalent to “dying with Christ” in terms of participating in the human marginality through “radical sharing of the experience of those who suffer.”<sup>36</sup> “To be in Christ” is living like Christ by acknowledging God’s involvement in our lives and reconstructing the diversity in a believing community. By connecting “in Christ” and the language of “body of Christ,”

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<sup>34</sup> C. H. Dodd, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans* (The Moffatt New Testament Commentary; London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1932), 88.

<sup>35</sup> Yung Suk Kim, *Christ’s Body in Corinth: The Politics of a Metaphor* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008), 36-37.

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

Kim suggest that the phrase refers to “a new space and time.” According to his explanation, “This new space and time can be termed the ‘third space’ of a community that is struggling toward liberation and justice for all.”<sup>37</sup> Kim’s insight that “in Christ” and “body of Christ” indicate a new space and time is useful for Korean immigrant believers in terms of apprehending Paul’s phrase not as something abstract and fixed but as a concrete and changeable way of life. According to this aspect, “being in Christ” refers to a life of participating in Christ’s self-sacrificing life and death in order to embody God’s eschatological reign in our daily lives and in the activities of immigrant churches.

#### B. Literary Backgrounds of New Creation in 2 Corinthians 1-5

Paul uses the phrase “in Christ” seven times in 2 Corinthians (2:14, 17; 3:14; 5:17, 19; 12:2,19). I will particularly investigate the four verses in chapters 1-5, because they directly connect to 5:17 by providing a literary environment for Paul’s use of “in Christ” in the verse. I will approach these four verses with the holistic and communal perspective that many Korean immigrant believers are sharing. In 2:14a, the first appearance of the expression, Paul says, “But thanks be to God, who always leads us to triumph *in Christ*.”<sup>38</sup> Here Paul describes that it is “in Christ” that God leads Paul and his followers in triumphal procession. From this perspective, the phrase denotes a sacred realm and an eschatological time in which God accomplishes the divine purpose for believers.

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 38.

<sup>38</sup> Emphasis added.

Paul uses the phrase again in 2:17b, which can be translated into “but as of sincerity, but as from God, before God, *in Christ* we speak.”<sup>39</sup> Thrall attempts to explain that “in Christ” refers to “under the direction of Christ.”<sup>40</sup> David E. Barnett provides another explanation that “in Christ” means “the fullness of a relationship with Christ.”<sup>41</sup> Garland tries to relate the term with the Spirit, “Speaking in Christ ... is synonymous with being taught by the Spirit.”<sup>42</sup> As mentioned above, there is no scholarly consensus about the clear meaning of “in Christ” and it is the same case in 2:17b as elsewhere. It is important, however, to pay close attention to the three phrases with different prepositions in it: “from (ἐκ) God; before or in the sight of (κατέναντι) God; and in (ἐν) Christ.” Paul’s use of those expressions implies that being “in Christ” is similar to being “before God” and to becoming one “from God.” Those prepositions may suggest that “to be in Christ” is an expression for having an intimate relationship with God.

The third usage of “in Christ” is shown in 3:14: “But their minds were hardened. Indeed, to this very day, when they hear the reading of the old covenant, that same veil is still there, since only *in Christ* is it set aside” (NRSV).<sup>43</sup> Scholars have proposed various interpretations of the “veil,” which was put aside in Christ. Thrall believes that the veil is “the barrier to perception,”<sup>44</sup> while Hughes argues that it is not something intellectual but

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<sup>39</sup> Emphasis added.

<sup>40</sup> Thrall, *The Second Epistle*, 216.

<sup>41</sup> Barnett, *The Second Epistle*, 159.

<sup>42</sup> Garland, *2 Corinthians*, 154.

<sup>43</sup> Emphasis added.

<sup>44</sup> Thrall, *The Second Epistle*, 266.

moral, “people’s *hearts* remained veiled.”<sup>45</sup> Whatever the veil refers to,<sup>46</sup> Paul clarifies that “only in Christ” the veil can be lifted. About the meaning of “in Christ” and “the veil,” Furnish explains, “it signifies that it is only ‘in relationship to’ Christ that one is delivered from the bondage of the old covenant.”<sup>47</sup> Paul is saying about the abolishment of the veil that covers God’s people and confines them under the rule of the old covenant by preventing them from seeing the glory of God (v. 18).

In v. 16, Paul again talks about the removal of the veil: “whenever one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.” Paul uses the expression, ἐπιστρέψῃ πρὸς κύριον, which can be translated, “turns to the Lord” as a condition for the removal of the veil. The elimination of the veil gives God’s people freedom in the Spirit. According to Gordon D. Fee’s explanation, “the ‘freedom’ that comes with the removal of the veil means that people now have access to God’s presence so as to behold the ‘glory,’ which the veil kept them from seeing.”<sup>48</sup> If the phrase “in Christ” in v. 14 and “turns to the Lord” in v. 16 can be put together, it is quite possible that Paul suggests that “being in Christ” is closely related to “turning to the Lord,” which give them the freedom and the sight to see the glory of the Lord. As a result, to be “in Christ” is not only to have a relationship with God, which enables God’s people to experience the freedom in the Spirit, but also to have eyes to see the glory of God.

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<sup>45</sup> Hughes, *Paul’s Second Epistle*, 78.

<sup>46</sup> For various understandings of the veil, See Wayne Coppins, *The Interpretation of Freedom in the Letters of Paul: With Special Reference to the ‘German’ Tradition* (Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), 82-85.

<sup>47</sup> Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 209.

<sup>48</sup> Gordon D. Fee, *God’s Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994), 309.

5:19a contains the fourth use of “in Christ.” Paul says, “God was reconciling the world to himself *in Christ*.”<sup>49</sup> As Albert Schweitzer points out, Paul’s expression, “in Christ” can be understood as “through Christ.”<sup>50</sup> It seems that some scholars agree with Schweitzer’s argument and believe that “in Christ” in 5:19 is equivalent to “through Christ” in 5:18.<sup>51</sup> In other words, “it is *by the agency of Christ* that God was reconciling the world to himself.”<sup>52</sup> It is somewhat obvious that Paul repeats and expands what he says in 5:18 in 5:19 by changing several important terms; from διὰ Χριστοῦ to ἐν Χριστῷ, from καταλλάξαντος ἡμᾶς ἑαυτῷ to κόσμον καταλλάσσων ἑαυτῷ, and from τὴν διακονίαν τῆς καταλλαγῆς to τὸν λόγον τῆς καταλλαγῆς. In 5:18, Paul says, “God *reconciled us to himself through Christ* and gave us *the ministry of reconciliation*.” In 5:19, the same God “was *reconciling the world to himself in Christ* by not counting their wrongdoings and entrusting to us *the word of reconciliation*.” Paul presents Christ as the main channel for God’s loving act of reconciling with humanity and the cosmos. “In Christ” God stretches the hand of reconciliation to the corrupted creation and restores it “through Christ.” Therefore, “in Christ” in 5:19 is equivalent to “through Christ” in 5:18, which means that God has reconciled with humanity by the personality and action of Christ. In this portrayal, Christ is the agent for God’s reign of the created world

This survey on the four verses that contain the phrase “in Christ” shows that it is not easy to infer a fixed definition of the phrase. It is possible, nevertheless, to suggest

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<sup>49</sup> Emphasis added.

<sup>50</sup> Albert Schweitzer, *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle* (trans. William Montgomery; London: A. & C. Black, 1931), 124.

<sup>51</sup> See Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 318; Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 153; Barnett, *The Second Epistle*, 306; and Garland, *2 Corinthians*, 293.

<sup>52</sup> Matera, *II Corinthians*, 140.

some observations for interpreting *καινή κτίσις* and the whole verse of 2 Cor 5:17 from the holistic and communal perspective of Korean immigrant believers. First, “in Christ” refers to an intimate and personal relationship with the Lord. Second, formulating this relationship is not an individual event but communal. In order to explain what is to be in Christ, Paul often uses expressions with plural pronoun such as “leads us” (2:14) “we speak” (2:17) “all of us” (3:18), and “reconciled us” (5:18). Those instances may imply that in Paul’s understanding, being-in-Christ is something primarily communal. Third, by being-in-Christ, believers can enjoy the freedom in the Holy Spirit and can have new eyes to see God’s glory; being-in-Christ is therefore the results of having been freed from some kind of bondage. Fourth, “in Christ” can refer to a *divine realm* and an *eschatological time* in which God’s mysterious works like reconciling with the creation can be done.

### C. *καινή κτίσις* and Understanding of 2 Corinthians 5:17

After describing “being-in-Christ” as the essential condition for God’s new creation, Paul introduces the term, *καινή κτίσις*. My reading of the phrase “in Christ” in 2 Corinthians 1-5 with the holistic and communal viewpoint of Korean immigrant believers will also guide my interpretation of the term. I hope to choose an interpretation of *καινή κτίσις*, that will be most helpful for the Korean immigrant believers and their churches.

As many scholars point out,<sup>53</sup> vv. 16 and 17 are closely related and parallel to each other because both verses start with the same word, *ὥστε* and both refer to radical changes. In v. 16, the people who are living for Christ who died and were raised come to

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<sup>53</sup> See Hubbard, *New Creation in Paul’s Letters*, 177; Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 332; and Hendrikus Boer, “2 Corinthians 5:14-6:2: a Fragment of Pauline Christology,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 64 (2002): 545.

have a new way of knowing other human beings. In the old creation, the normal way of perceiving others was κατὰ σάρκα, “according to flesh.”<sup>54</sup> Paul admits that “we have known even Christ according to flesh” (ἐγνώκαμεν κατὰ σάρκα Χριστόν). Paul’s idea of knowing “according to flesh” can be well connected to his mention of circumcision and uncircumcision in Gal 6:15 (which will be fully explained in the next chapter). In the old world, a religious mark on flesh, circumcision, plays an important role in determining one’s identity and community.

Paul, however, says that a radical change has happened to “us”: “but now we no longer know so” (ἀλλὰ νῦν οὐκέτι γινώσκομεν, 16c). According to Paul’s description, the change is particularly associated to the way through which “we” regard other human beings. According to J Louis Martyn, even though Paul and other believers are not living entirely or completely in the new age, they are “at the juncture of the ages... where some are being saved and some are perishing.”<sup>55</sup> At this juncture, the standard way of knowing of the old age, “perceiving someone according to flesh,” has been replaced by a new way of knowing, which is formulated and guided by the Spirit from God.<sup>56</sup> The new way of life characterized by the radically new manner of knowing is part of the new creation that Jesus brought through his death and resurrection.<sup>57</sup> In Martyn’s terms, this new creation

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<sup>54</sup> One of the unique mentalities that many Korean immigrants share is that they regard “outward appearance” significant in “evaluating” others. According to this mentality, they often judge someone based on his/her outward appearances such as height, body shape, skin color, cloth, car, degree of formal education, and family background and so on.

<sup>55</sup> J. Louis Martyn, “Epistemology at the Turn of the Ages: 2 Cor. 5:16,” in *Christian History and Interpretation: Studies Presented to John Knox* (ed. W. R. Farmer et al.; London, UK: The Cambridge University Press, 1967), 284-85.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> W. Hulitt Gloer, “2 Corinthians 5:14-21,” *Review & Expositor* 86 (1989): 398-99.

“can be seen only by the new eyes granted at the *junction* of the ages.”<sup>58</sup> Those who participate in Christ’s death, which means having an intimate relationship with Christ by “being-in-Christ,” can obtain the eyes through which they can see and realize the existence of an eschatological new world inaugurated by the Christ event.

As explained above, “being-in-Christ” enables the participants to have new eyes to see the glory of God and to enter a divine realm and an eschatological time in which they can recognize God’s creative works. They just begin to see the glory of new world, which is already started but not yet completed.<sup>59</sup> They come to perceive that not only their perspectives but also their existential foundations are undergoing transformation. The people who are “in Christ” can find out that they “have not only abandoned *worldly standards* of judgment (v. 16); they have also become part of a wholly *new creation*.” Being-in-Christ not only changes one’s criteria of knowing others, from “according to the flesh” to “according to the cross,”<sup>60</sup> but also radically reforms one’s realm of living from the old to the new age. This understanding of having new eyes for God’s work in the new creation is significant for the Korean believers who need to have a vision for God’s redemptive actions in the midst of their struggles in America.

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<sup>58</sup> Martyn, “Epistemology,” 286.

<sup>59</sup> Sanders explains, “the full transformation, and hence the complete transfer from the old creation or old aeon to the new, still lies in the future, as II Cor. 5.1-5 makes clear; but Paul sees the renewal as being already at work. That presumably means that when in II Cor. 5.17 Paul writes that one in Christ is a new creation (or, if one is in Christ there is a new creation), the new creation is considered present either proleptically or at least incompletely.” E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), 468.

<sup>60</sup> Martyn argues that “it is clear that the opposite of knowing *κατὰ σάρκα* is not knowing *κατὰ πνεῦμα* but rather knowing *κατὰ σταυρόν*.” Martyn, “Epistemology,” 285. In Gal 4:29, Paul juxtaposes *κατὰ σάρκα* and *κατὰ πνεῦμα*.



It is quite clear that Christ's death and resurrection have inaugurated an eschatological new world and caused a radical turn of the ages. Those who participate in the Christ event as a result of God's grace on them and their positive response to it begin to realize that the newly created world is already being established in their daily lives as an eschatological reality and that they are required to live by a totally different standard, which is far from knowing others according to the flesh. Although the final completion of new creation is laid in the future, the old age has already passed away and new one has already come. They are living in an eschatological time.

#### Conclusion

My reading of κτίσις in Rom 8:18-25, paying close attention to the meaning of the expressions, "Groaning Together" and "Suffering in Labor Pains Together," shows that κτίσις refers to a holistic community in which human beings and non-human creatures are deeply connected together. This is the interpretation that I choose among several legitimate and plausible possible interpretations not only because I approach Rom 8:18-25 with the holistic and communal perspective that many Korean immigrant believers are sharing, but also because I have attempted to see the text keeping in mind the situations of Korean immigrants suffering from the oppressive social structure of American society. Paul correctly shows that the human and non-human creations as a holistic community resist destructive and suppressive powers by groaning together. They are also suffering together in the labor pains of childbirth, expecting God's imminent and redemptive intervention.

From my reading of 2 Cor 5:17, I choose to understand, among several possibilities, that the phrases “in Christ” refers to a *divine realm* and an *eschatological time* in which people can have new eyes to see the creative works of God through Christ for the community of believers. To be “in Christ” is a condition through which believers can realize that God’s eschatological new world is already present in their lives and they are participating in it through Christ. They are witnessing the replacement of the old age with the new. In God’s eschatological new world, they have received a new mission to pursue such as “the ministry of reconciliation.” This ministry is a struggle for the Korean immigrant believers to participate in establishing God’s new world on American soil. In this perspective, Pauline texts as Scripture function as corrective lens<sup>61</sup> through which Korean immigrant believers can see the vision of God’s redemptive works among them.

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<sup>61</sup> According to Patte, there are many roles that Scripture can play for believers. The roles can be described in common metaphors such as “*lamp to my feet*,” “*rule of the community*,” “*good news*,” “*book of covenant*,” “*corrective lens*,” “*empowering word*,” and “*Holy Bible*.” Scripture as *corrective lens* “conveys to the community of believers a vision of God’s interventions in their present life experiences; believers can recognize that the Scriptures are fulfilled.” Daniel Patte, “Scripture” in *The Cambridge Dictionary of Christianity* (ed. Daniel Patte; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 1137-39. Emphasis is original.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### NEW CREATION IN GALATIANS

In the previous chapter, I have attempted to show the choices we have for understanding Paul's idea of creation in Romans 8 and new creation in 2 Corinthians 5, and I have begun to assess which of these choices would be most helpful for Korean Christian immigrants. The most helpful choice was the interpretation that gives priority to 1) Paul's emphasis on a holistic connectedness between human beings and non-human creations and their suffering together in labor pains of childbirth as a communal sign of anticipating the imminent intervention of God; and 2) to Paul's explanation of the phrase, "in Christ," as denoting a divine realm and eschatological time—while "being in Christ" refers to the way to realize God's new creation. Among several scholarly understandings of Paul's new creation in Galatians, which one is potentially the most helpful for Korean immigrant believers?

At the end of his letter to the Galatians, Paul declares, "οὔτε γὰρ περιτομή τί ἐστὶν οὔτε ἀκροβυστία, ἀλλὰ καινὴ κτίσις" (6:15), which can be translated, "because neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is anything, but new creation." Some scholars believe that the phrase, καινὴ κτίσις not only contains the essence of Paul's theology but also functions as a climax of his arguments in Galatians. For example, Hans Dieter Betz, who regards the last portion of the letter (6:11-18) as an "autographic postscript"<sup>1</sup> written by

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<sup>1</sup> According to Betz, "autographic postscript" plays several roles such as authenticating the letter, summarizing the main points of the letter, and adding concerns that the sender comes to have after the finishing of the letter. See Hans Dieter Betz, *Galatians* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 312.

Paul himself, elucidates the importance of this concluding section: “It contains the interpretive clues to the understanding of Paul’s major concerns in the letter as a whole and should be employed as the *hermeneutical key to the intentions of the Apostle*.”<sup>2</sup> Richard N. Longenecker, in a similar line of thought, suggests, “Paul uses it [v. 15] to climax all of his arguments and exhortations in 1:6-5:12 with respect to the judaizing threat.”<sup>3</sup> Jeffrey A. D. Weima also points out the critical role of the term in comprehending Paul’s theology: “the concept of new creation, therefore, is of paramount importance for understanding Paul’s theology in Galatians.”<sup>4</sup> As these scholars suggest, it is necessary to investigate the key phrase, *καινή κτίσις* in order to understand the core message of Paul in Galatians.

#### 1. Paul’s Declaration of “Death” to the *Cosmos*

Paul places his climatic announcement of *καινή κτίσις* in the concluding section of his letter (6:11-18). His placement of the term, *καινή κτίσις*, requires us to inquire into the literary context of it, particularly its previous verse 14 where the term, *κόσμος* is used. By investigating v. 14, especially the meaning and function of the word *κόσμος* in it, I will attempt to get useful insights for possible understandings of v. 15, specifically the crucial phrase, *καινή κτίσις*. In 6:14, Paul declares, “May I never boast except in the cross (*σταυρῶ*) of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the cosmos (*κόσμος*) is crucified to me and I to the cosmos (*κόσμῳ*).”

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<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 313. Emphasis added.

<sup>3</sup> Richard N. Longenecker, *Galatians* (WBC 41; Dallas: Word Books, 1990), 296. See also Moyer V. Hubbard, *New Creation in Paul’s Letters and Thought* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 229.

<sup>4</sup> Jeffrey A. D. Weima, “Gal. 6:11-18: A Hermeneutical Key to the Galatian Letter,” *CTJ* 28 (1993): 102.

First, Paul's term, κόσμος, can be interpreted as referring to an old world in which not only religious and ethnic differentiations are regarded as fundamental, but also an old world that has fully adopted repressive and hierarchical social systems. In 1:4, Paul clearly states, "Christ gave himself for our sins in order to deliver us *from the present evil age* (ἐκ τοῦ αἰῶνος τοῦ ἐνεστώτος πονηροῦ)." The phrase, "the present evil age" shows Paul's basic understanding of the old world, κόσμος, which is in the process of being replaced by God's new world.

Scholars have proposed several possible connotations of the term, κόσμος. The reformer John Calvin regards it as whatever opposes "the spiritual kingdom of Christ."<sup>5</sup> In a similar line of thought, Timothy George explains κόσμος as "the world-system that in its basic values and orientation is alienated from God."<sup>6</sup> G. Walter Hansen sees κόσμος as a world that can be characterized by "prideful boasting about national identity, social status and religious practices."<sup>7</sup> According to Ernest D. W. Burton, κόσμος is "the mode of life characterized by earthly advantages."<sup>8</sup> With the supersessionist (anti-Semitic) sense in mind, J Louis Martyn carefully defines the meaning of κόσμος by saying that "the world that is now *passé* is not Judaism as such, but rather the world of *all* religious differentiation."<sup>9</sup> These scholars' insights are helpful in terms of appreciating the multifold meaning of κόσμος. This type of interpretation seems plausible from the

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<sup>5</sup> John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul to the Galatians and Ephesians* (trans. W. Pringle; Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1948), 184.

<sup>6</sup> Timothy George, *Galatians* (NAC 30; Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 437.

<sup>7</sup> G. Walter Hansen, *Galatians* (The IVP New Testament Commentary Series; Illinois: Inter Varsity Press, 1994), 200.

<sup>8</sup> Ernest D. W. Burton, *Galatians* (ICC 10; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1959), 354 and 514.

<sup>9</sup> Martyn, *Galatians*, 565. Emphasis is original.

perspective of the context of Korean immigrants: κόσμος refers to an old world where all the socio-cultural and religio-ethnic differences are not only allowed but also emphasized. κόσμος indicates a society where religious differentiation such as circumcision or uncircumcision is crucial and where ethnic and national identities determine social position, economic status, and so on. It also denotes a world where the already existing status quo can rarely be challenged and where the status quo is undergirded so that gaps between the different social groups are widened.

Second, Paul's declaration, "the cosmos is crucified to me and I to the cosmos" (6:14b) can be regarded as his "death announcement" to κόσμος and vice versa. By so doing, Paul provides his understanding of his relationship to κόσμος. If the image of death is usually connected with the concept of "being separated from," Paul is stressing, through this statement, his separation from κόσμος, the old world of discriminations and hierarchical relationships. In order to proclaim his death to the cosmos, Paul adopts the term, σταυρώω, "to crucify." This term not only is closely related to his use of the term, σταυρός, "cross," in the first half of the verse, but also conveys the image of Christ's death, which resulted in the resurrection on the third day. Paul's choice of σταυρώω implies that the purpose of his "death" statement is not the death itself, but something what comes after death: The new life in Christ who has been raised from the dead, as in 5:24-25.<sup>10</sup>

In the first half of 6:14, Paul uses the term, σταυρός as an object of the verb, καυχάομαι, "to boast of." He argues that "μη γένοιτο καυχᾶσθαι εἰ μη ἐν τῷ σταυρῷ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ," which can be translated as "I never boast in anything

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<sup>10</sup> According to Bruce's explanation, "'crucified to the world' is part of what is involved in being 'crucified with Christ.'" F. F. Bruce, *Galatians*, 272.

except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.” In other words, if there is something in which he can boast about it is the cross of Christ. By mentioning “boasting in the cross,” Paul seems to contrast two different types of boasting: “boasting in the flesh” (6:13) and “boasting in the cross.” In the second half of v. 13, Paul mentions the purpose of his opponents’ demand of circumcision on the Galatians, ἵνα ἐν τῇ ὑμετέρᾳ σαρκὶ καυχῆσονται, which can be translated as “so that they could boast in your flesh.”<sup>11</sup> As Betz explains, those two oppositional kinds of boasting could be called “proper and improper ‘boasting.’”<sup>12</sup> For Paul “boasting in the flesh” is something that his opponents who still belong to the cosmos are eager to pursue and achieve by their own efforts. “Boasting in the cross,” on the contrary, is the sort of boasting that is “allowed” for the true believers of Christ who have found their new identity in Christ.<sup>13</sup>

Third, Paul’s proclamation of his death to the cosmos also denotes that the values that used to be precious and significant in the world of κόσμος are no longer meaningful to him. In this aspect, Paul’s announcement reminds us of his words in Phil 3:2-11 where he declares that he regards whatever he had as a loss because of Christ. In Phil 3:3, Paul repeats his idea of “boasting in Christ” and selects the terms that he adopts in Gal 4:14a.<sup>14</sup> Paul has many credentials as an “authentic” Jew. Paul argues that if anyone has reason to be confident in the flesh, he has more. He has every reason to boast in the flesh and the

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<sup>11</sup> Detailed interpretation of Gal 6:13 will be provided in the next chapter.

<sup>12</sup> Betz, *Galatians*, 317.

<sup>13</sup> Betz argues that if “boasting in the flesh” is “self-praise,” “boasting in the cross” should be regarded as “doxology” or “hymn” because the salvation, the only thing that believers can be proud of was not attained by their own works or efforts but given by God’s grace through the death and resurrection of Christ. In this aspect, ‘boasting in the cross of Christ’ is possibly only for those who are ἐν Χριστῷ.” Ibid., 318-19.

<sup>14</sup> In Phil 3:3, Paul uses the verb, καυχῶμαι and preposition, ἐν, and the two nouns, Ἰησοῦς and Χριστός: “καυχώμενοι ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ,” “we boast in Christ Jesus.”

privileges that had come to him by birth and upbringing. Paul talks about many prerogatives that he once had: religiously, he was circumcised on the eighth day; ethnically he was an Israelite who particularly belonged to the tribe of Benjamin, which made him “a Hebrew of Hebrews”; about the Law, he was an enthusiastic Pharisee who was blameless from the standard of the Law (Phil 3:5-6; Gal 1:13-14). He has had many privileges and confidences in the flesh not only from his birth, but also from what he has achieved in his life. Paul however regards all things not only as a loss, but also as rubbish because he has found “the surpassing value of knowing Christ” (Phil 3:8).

Abandoning whatever he had and deserting all the privileges that he used to enjoy, however, is not something easy to do. It involves great pain. Escaping from the old world and entering into a new realm requires suffering due to losing something meaningful. Paul explains that he has suffered from the loss and through the suffering he comes to have regarded all things as rubbish (Phil 3:8). That can be why Paul has utilized the image of being crucified, both when he speaks of his death to the law in Gal 2:19 and when he announces his death to the cosmos in Gal 6:14. The prize for his denial of many prerogatives is to gain Christ and to be found in him. Just as Christ denied his privilege and humiliated himself, so Paul has abandoned his own credentials and humbled himself to be found in Christ.

Fourth, Paul emphasizes the central role of the cross in his death announcement to κόσμος. He uses the verb, σταυρόω in order to give the reason for his separation for the cosmos: the cross on which Christ died and through which Christ saved him. As Martyn correctly points out, “the cross separated Paul totally from the whole of the religious



cosmos.”<sup>15</sup> The cross of Christ is the ultimate source for Paul’s decision to proclaim his death to the cosmos.

Fifth, the term κόσμος can be understood as an antithesis of καινή κτίσις. The reformer, John Calvin already sensed this kind of dichotomic relationship between the two words.<sup>16</sup> κόσμος refers to a realm where uncircumcision could be regarded shameful and inferior to circumcision, which indicates someone’s sense of belonging, ethnic and religious community. It is a society where someone is superior to another based on their family background, occupation, or gender.<sup>17</sup> καινή κτίσις, on the contrary, refers to a world where various distinctions such as circumcision and uncircumcision, Jew and Gentile, male and female, free and slave cease to be significant. By juxtaposing the two terms, Paul is emphasizing the characteristic of God’s new world, καινή κτίσις, which is very different from κόσμος. If the former is free, egalitarian, and life-giving, the latter is enslaving, hierarchical, and oppressive.

In sum, Paul’s description of his own privileges that he gave up to be found in Christ in his letter to the Philippians help us understand more clearly what Paul is talking about through his declaration of “I am crucified to the cosmos.” Paul is denoting that he is departing from the sphere of the old world where religious and ethnic differentiations

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<sup>15</sup> Martyn, *Galatians*, 565.

<sup>16</sup> John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul to the Galatians and Ephesians* (trans. W. Pringle; Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1948), 184.

<sup>17</sup> In the *Chosun* dynasty (1392-1897), the traditional Korean society, there were hierarchical social classes according to one’s birth: the elite (*yangban*), the professional class (*jungin*); the commoners (*sangmin*), who made up the largest group, and the lowest class (*cheonmin*). Social classes were also determined by jobs. The typical job divisions were *Sha-Nhong-Ghong-Shang*. *Sha* referred to a government official that *Yang-bhan* who studied the teachings of Confucius usually had; *Nhong* meant a farmer who produced rice, the main food for Koreans; *Ghong* referred to a skillful man who produced daily necessities such as spoon, chopstick, and pottery; and *Shang* meant a merchant who traded products. Hagen Koo, “The Korean Stratification System: Continuity and Change,” in *Modern Korean Society: Its Development and Prospect* (ed. Hyuk-Rae Kim and Bok Song; Berkeley: The Regents of the University of California, 2007), 36-62.

are critical. Through his mentioning of God's *καινή κτίσις*, Paul envisions a new community and new world where various differentiations based on one's ethnic, religious, social backgrounds do not matter.

## 2. Paul's Declaration of the New Creation

While Paul proclaims his departure from *κόσμος* through his "death-declaration" in v. 14, he argues that now he belongs to a new world by his mention of *καινή κτίσις* in v. 15. Paul prepared his audience for this statement of the new creation by repeating in 5:6 the same expression, "neither circumcision nor uncircumcision, but..." Paul's basic conviction is that in God's new world the ultimate power is not laid on a religious mark on people's flesh such as circumcision but on the "faith(fullness) of Christ."<sup>18</sup> Paul utilizes the same sentence structure both in 5:6 and 6:15: "γὰρ...οὔτε περιτομή τι...οὔτε

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<sup>18</sup> The famous debate on the issue of "faith of/in Christ" between Hays and Dunn should be noted. Hays regards the expression, *πίστις Χριστοῦ* as "the subjective genitive" and translates it: "faith of Christ." He argues this reading is preferable to Dunn's "objective genitive" understanding: "faith in Christ." He defines the debate between "subjective genitive" and "objective genitive" as "a distinction between the *christological* and *anthropological* interpretations of *πίστις Χριστοῦ*." He further argues, "The christological reading highlights the salvific efficacy of Jesus Christ's faith(fullness) for God's people; the anthropological reading stresses the salvific efficacy of the human act of faith directed toward Christ" (39-40). In Hays' understanding, God's promise to Abraham is fulfilled through the faithfulness of Christ, a true seed of Abraham. See Richard B. Hays, "ΠΙΣΤΙΣ and Pauline Christology: What Is at Stake?" in *Pauline Theology, Volume IV: Looking Back, Pressing On* (ed. E. E. Johnson and D. M. Hay; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997), 35-60. Dunn, on the other hand, regards *πίστις Χριστοῦ* as "the objective genitive" and prefers to translate it into, "faith in Christ." He explains, "on Hays' thesis we have no clear reference to the 'faith' of believers...Hays leaves us with no noun counterpart, no noun to denote the Galatians' act of believing. Hays's thesis vacuums up every relevant reference to 'faith' in Galatians in order to defend the subject genitive reading of 2:16, 20 and 3:22" (69). Dunn argues: "The logic of Paul's argument is that Christians are Abraham's children by a *twofold* action – by sharing in Abraham's faith (3:7), and by being 'in Christ' (3:28-29)" (71). According to Dunn, "Paul was in effect attacking the traditional Jewish understanding of Abraham which saw him as the archetype of *faithfulness*...Abraham's *πίστις* meant his faith, his naked trust in God's promise...and therefore *not* his 'faithfulness'" (75). In Dunn's comprehension, just as Abraham had faith in God's faithfulness, so Christians are those who share the faith of Abraham and, as a result, have faith in God's faithfulness. See James D. G. Dunn, "Once More, ΠΙΣΤΙΣ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΥ," in *Pauline Theology, Volume IV: Looking Back, Pressing On* (ed. E. E. Johnson and D. M. Hay; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997), 61-81.

ἀκροβυστία, ἀλλὰ....”<sup>19</sup> He mentions the negative things first by using the expression, οὔτε...οὔτε...(neither...nor...), then introduces his primary idea with ἀλλὰ...(but...).<sup>20</sup>

Let’s see the two verses together:

ἐν γὰρ Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ οὔτε περιτομή τι ἰσχύει οὔτε ἀκροβυστία,  
ἀλλὰ πίστις δι’ ἀγάπης ἐνεργουμένη (5:6).

οὔτε γὰρ περιτομή τί ἐστὶν οὔτε ἀκροβυστία,  
ἀλλὰ καινὴ κτίσις (6:15).

Paul is saying in 5:6 that “in Christ Jesus” (that is also in God’s καινὴ κτίσις ) neither circumcision nor uncircumcision “has any power,” if we take the literal sense of the term, ἰσχύει. “It is not merely that circumcision is of lesser importance in the new scheme of things; rather,” as Hays explains, “the whole binary opposition between circumcision and uncircumcision has been literally nullified.”<sup>21</sup> Paul clearly argues an important condition for experiencing God’s new world, is to be ἐν Χριστῷ, “in Christ.”<sup>22</sup> As mentioned earlier,<sup>23</sup> if “being in Christ” refers to a life of participating in Christ’s self-sacrificing life and death, Paul’s description of his own crucifixion in 6:14 shows his consistent understanding of the phrase. Just as Paul suggests that ἐν Χριστῷ is a prerequisite for his declaration that both circumcision and uncircumcision are nothing in 5:6, so he

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<sup>19</sup> Even though Paul puts γὰρ after οὔτε in 6:15, this kind of different word order does not make any difference in terms of meaning and nuance of the sentence.

<sup>20</sup> In 1 Cor 7:19, even though Paul does not use the same words such as οὔτε, he adopts a similar sentence structure, mentioning negative judgment first and then his main idea: “The circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing, but (ἀλλὰ) keeping God’s commandments.”

<sup>21</sup> Hays, *Galatians*, 344.

<sup>22</sup> Matera explains “Christ” as “the sphere or the realm in which the believer dwells.” Frank J. Matera, *Galatians* (Sacra Pagina Series, Vol. 9; Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1992), 182.

<sup>23</sup> About detailed explanation of the expression, ἐν Χριστῷ, see chapter four.

emphasizes that it is the power in the cross of Christ which nullifies the religious mark on the flesh in 6:14.

After his negative judgment on the religious and ethnic differentiation such as circumcision, Paul introduces a positive counterpart after ἀλλὰ. In 5:6, Paul argues that “πίστις δι’ ἀγάπης ἐνεργουμένη,” “faith actively working through love” has certain power in God’s new world. If faith is “the ground of inclusion” into the Pauline community of believers,<sup>24</sup> love is the way through which faith can be expressed and performed.

According to Martyn’s explanation, love is “the concrete pattern of life, established and incited by Christ’s faithful, dying love for us...this loving pattern of life is continued in the community in which each member is the servant of the other, bearing the other’s burdens.”<sup>25</sup> The faith(fullness) of Christ who has become the ultimate sign of God’s love for corrupted and enslaved creations including human beings is the power that breaks down various boundaries of religious, ethnic, socio-economic, geo-political elements that have undergirded the old world.

### 3. New Creation through the Power of the Cross

I have already introduced and provided evaluations of the various understandings of the term, καινὴ κτίσις in the chapter one. I do not want to repeat them here again.

However, I need to emphasize the role of the cross in Paul’s comprehension of the new creation. As the cross of Christ enables him to say “farewell” to the old world order, it is

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<sup>24</sup> Robert A. Atkins, *Egalitarian Community: Ethnography and Exegesis* (Tuscaloosa, Alabama: The University of Alabama Press, 1991), 165.

<sup>25</sup> Martyn, *Galatians*, 474. Howard also points out Paul’s emphasis on love in the assembly of God’s people. See James M. Howard, *Paul, the Community, and Progressive Sanctification: An Exploration into Community-Based Transformation within Pauline Theology* (New York: Peter Lang, 2007), 143.

the same cross that ushers him into God's new world. The power of Christ's crucified on the cross has initiated God's eschatological time and space in the midst of the imperial systems of the current world. According to Cousar's explanation, "with the death and resurrection of Christ a whole new world has been created, which exists simultaneously to and in contention with the passing world."<sup>26</sup> In other words, the eschatological reign of God has been started through the death and resurrection of Christ. The universal power of Christ's cross enables Paul to live in this radically new realm. As described earlier, the way to join in this new world is to "be in Christ," a participation in Christ's self-sacrificing life and death through which one can be empowered by the cross. Paul's departure from the cosmos and his partaking in the cross and death of Christ has for result his arrival in *κατὰ κτίσις* and new life.

Entering into God's new world inevitably causes an existential change. The world that those who are participating in the self-sacrificing life and death of Christ can experience is not a world of fantasy made of totally exotic ingredients but a world of new existence. As Betz clarifies, those who are in Christ can "participate in the new human existence."<sup>27</sup> Bruce Longenecker's description of this new existence is helpful: "What Paul has in mind when he envisages the inauguration of a new world is...the establishment of a new realm of existence. It is a sphere of life wholly differentiated from the 'cosmos' that has been crucified to Paul, a domain where distinctive patterns of life

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<sup>26</sup> Charles B. Cousar, *Galatians* (Interpretation; Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1982), 154-55. Cousar also explains that sometimes God's new thing is pictured "as new exodus from bondage (cf. Isa 42:9; 43:18-19)," at other times "as a new heaven and a new earth (cf. Isa 65:17; 66:22)." Charles B. Cousar, "2 Corinthians 5:17-21," *Interpretation* 35 (1981): 181.

<sup>27</sup> Betz, *Galatians*, 320.

are operative.”<sup>28</sup> Not only Paul but also those who participate in the event of Christ can experience the total change of the world, which leads to their own existential shift from the old to new. According to Martyn’s explanation, “Paul refers to the cosmic event experienced by every member of the Galatian churches. They were all crucified with Christ. They all suffered the consequent loss of the world of religious differentiation.”<sup>29</sup> Those who have experienced their existential shift can realize that they are already living in a radically new world inaugurated through Christ, καινή κτίσις.

#### 4. New Creation as a Critique of the Imperial Powers

Paul’s announcement of his death to κόσμος and his introduction of καινή κτίσις as the eschatological new world of God should be understood as his ultimate critique of the old realm where not only various religious and ethnic differentiations are fundamental, but also where different types of imperial powers attempt to enslave all creation under their destructive domination. Paul’s declaration of God’s new world where various forms of boundaries and differences are no longer valid should be related to Paul’s description of a new social order in 3:28. By introducing this new social order, Paul criticizes the old realm. Paul declares that “οὐκ ἔνι Ἰουδαῖος οὐδὲ Ἕλληνας, οὐκ ἔνι δοῦλος οὐδὲ ἐλεύθερος, οὐκ ἔνι ἄρσεν καὶ θήλυ· πάντες γὰρ ὑμεῖς εἰς ἓστε ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ,” which can be translated into: “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no

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<sup>28</sup> Bruce W. Longenecker, *The Triumph of Abraham’s God: The Transformation of Identity in Galatians* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998), 37.

<sup>29</sup> Martyn, *Galatians*, 571.

male nor female, because all of you are one in Christ Jesus”(3:28).<sup>30</sup> In Paul’s understanding, if the old world can be characterized by numerous differentiations and hierarchical relationships, God’s new world is the opposite.

God has begun to abolish the hierarchical structures that enslave all people involved as well as the boundaries that prevent people from living as persons who have been created in God’s image.<sup>31</sup> According to Mark Goodacre, the Cappadocian fathers such as Basil, Gregory of Nazianzus, and Gregory of Nyssa often interpreted Gal 3:28 in the light of Gen 1:27: “In the promise that in Christ all human differences will be eliminated and all redeemed humanity will be one in Christ they [the Cappadocian fathers] find a promise of the restoration of the perfection of the original image of God.”<sup>32</sup> Establishing God’s new world is associated with the restoration of God’s image in human beings.

According to Paul, the notable character of *καινή κτίσις* is its boundary-crossing unity in Christ with no discrimination among those who are participating in God’s new community. Religious, ethnic, and gender distinctions that used to play critical roles in *κόσμος* become meaningless in God’s new world. Bruce Hansen correctly asserts that the essential characteristic of God’s new people is “overcoming social division in a new community.”<sup>33</sup> In this new world, there is no “privileged” or “superior” position among

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<sup>30</sup> According to George, “The three pairs of opposites Paul listed stand for the fundamental cleavages of human existence: ethnicity, economic capacity, and sexuality.” See George, *Galatians*, 284.

<sup>31</sup> Matera believes that the new creation refers to “what God had done in Christ by tearing down the barriers of race, class, and sexuality (3:28) that formerly separated people.” Matera, *Galatians*, 226.

<sup>32</sup> Mark Goodacre, *No Longer Male and Female: Interpreting Galatians 3:28 in Early Christianity* (New York: T & T Clark, 2010), 162.

<sup>33</sup> Bruce Hansen, *ALL OF YOU ARE ONE: The Social Vision of Gal 3.28, 1 Cor 12.13 and Col 3.11* (New York: T & T Clark, 2010), 194-95.

the participants. “Paul finds the essence of the Christian proclamation,” as Richard Longenecker argues, “that ‘in Christ Jesus’ there is a new ‘oneness’ that breaks down all former divisions and heals injustices.”<sup>34</sup> In Christ, there is no discrimination and no hierarchical relationship. All believers are one and equal before God and in God’s new world.

Paul’s declaration of equality and unity of all people in Christ is also his critique of the Roman Empire where social class such as slave or free and gender difference like male or female is critical. Paul argues that God’s eschatological new world is already here in the midst of “the present evil age” (1:4). The evilness of this present world becomes a prerequisite for God’s just and righteous world, *καινή κτίσις*. By arguing for God’s replacement of the old world with the new, Paul identifies the Roman Empire with the evil age. By proclaiming the eschatological new world, the new creation, Paul is asserting that the ruler of the old world is now being changed. The Roman Emperor as the masterful ruler of the old age is fading away with his old kingdom. God’s eschatological reign through Christ has begun in the midst of the imperial orders.

## 5. Embodiment of the New Creation

In the first chapter, I have mentioned one important limitation that various scholarly attempts to understand Paul’s *καινή κτίσις* have shown: treating it as an abstract concept. I have therefore proposed to examine how Paul has tried to embody God’s new creation through his mission and ministry. Paul’s assurance of God’s new creation has

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<sup>34</sup> Richard Longenecker, *Galatians*, 158.



enabled him to realize the existence of unjust power dynamics and their destructive impacts on all created things including the early believing communities.

Paul's firm belief in God's new world has opened his eyes to a new community of believers, ἐκκλησία, the church. For Paul the church is an embodiment of God's new world. Paul shows his enthusiastic passion and effort to establish this eschatological community, through which he attempts to overcome the imperial influences of Jerusalem and of the Roman Empire. According to Martyn, who basically regards καινή κτίσις as an eschatological new world, there are several embodiments of it: "The new creation is embodied in Christ, in the church, and thus in the Israel of God." First, Martyn identifies Christ as a new creation<sup>35</sup>: "Just as it is in the cross of Christ that God has accomplished the new creation, so there is a significant sense in which Christ *is* the new creation."<sup>36</sup> Second, he points out that Paul not only talks about "the church's incorporation in" Christ, but also elucidates the believers' incorporation in Christ by being baptized into Christ, by having the Spirit of Christ in their minds, and by completely belonging to Christ. This incorporation enables the Galatian believers to become "Abraham's corporate seed and God's new creation in Christ." Third, Martyn explains that the new creation is "the Israel of God" (Gal 6:16) and the people that "God is now calling into existence in Christ." The new creation is "embodied in those who, re-created by Christ's love, serve one another in

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<sup>35</sup> Osiek also attempts to identify Christ as the new creation and new Adam. The things that had been damaged because of the first Adam have been made new by Christ, the new Adam. See Carolyn Osiek, *Galatians* (New Testament Message 12; Delaware: Michael Glazier, 1980), 87.

<sup>36</sup> Martyn, *Galatians*, 573. Emphasis is original.

the new community of mutual concern.”<sup>37</sup> Those three embodiments, however, are not separated but interwoven.

Christ’s death and resurrection not only has initiated God’s καινή κτίσις, but also has created God’s new community, the church. Through being in Christ, believers find their new identity as the true heirs of Abraham, God’s chosen people, in Paul’s words, “the Israel of God.” The church as a visible and tangible organization as “the body of Christ”<sup>38</sup> functions as an eschatological new community where God’s people can gather for worship and spiritual growth through imitating Christ. James G. Samra correctly explains Paul’s theological concept of the church. According to him, in Paul’s idea of the church there are two conceptions such as “the body of Christ,” which refers to an identity, and “the people of God,” which denotes a community. The believers who are “*members of the body of Christ and of the people of God*” united in the church with other believers. Samra explains, “The centrality of the interrelated notions of identity and community in Paul’s conception of church can be detected in his choice and use of the term ἐκκλησία.”<sup>39</sup> The church is the place where believers can become a part of Christ’s body and find their true identity. In this aspect, the church can be a representative embodiment of God’s new creation.

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 574.

<sup>38</sup> About the theme of “the body of Christ,” see chapter four.

<sup>39</sup> James G. Samra, *Being Conformed to Christ in Community: A Study of Maturity, Maturation and the Local Church in the Undisputed Pauline Epistles* (New York: T & T Clark, 2006), 134. Emphasis is original.

## A. Understanding the *ekklēsia*

Scholars have suggested various understandings of ἐκκλησία. The main point of their debates is whether the term has been used specifically to describe the early believers in a religious sense by identifying them as the true people of God<sup>40</sup> or not. L. Cerfaux tries to explain the term, ἐκκλησία by comparing it with “the assembly of the Israelites in the desert.” He argues that the Israelite assembly was a permanent one and later it became a community, “a type of the messianic people.” This idea of “the messianic people” was inherited from the primitive believing community in Jerusalem and as a result the community was eventually called ἐκκλησία. Although the term ἐκκλησία was used only for the primitive believing community in Jerusalem, later it became applied to other local faith communities in Asia Minor.<sup>41</sup> The term ἐκκλησία meant “the community of Christians” to the Greeks because it carried “the fairly technical meaning of the liturgical gathering.”<sup>42</sup> Cerfaux describes how ἐκκλησία evolved as a term: “In its first stages the word conjured up the idea of the assembly of a people. For the Jerusalem Christians it was the assembly of the people of God in the desert which was raised up once more by divine decree as the messianic community which formed about Jesus Christ.” Later, the term entered the Greek world and “the society of Christians appeared to be like the

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<sup>40</sup> Rudolf Bultmann proposes three characteristic elements of the church: 1) It is “*the cultic assembly of the community*”; 2) it is “*the eschatological community*”; and 3) it is “*the fellowship of those called by God.*” Rudolf Bultmann, *Faith and Understanding* (trans. L. P. Smith; New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1969), 196-97. Emphasis is original. Minear tries to explain “the church” with various images such as “the people of God,” “the new creation,” “the fellowship in faith,” “the body of Christ.” See Paul S. Minear, *Images of the Church in the New Testament* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 1960).

<sup>41</sup> L. Cerfaux, *The Church in the Theology of Paul* (trans. G. Webb and A. Walker; New York: Herder and Herder, 1959), 187-88.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 191.

diaspora of the messianic people.”<sup>43</sup> For Cerfaux, the term ἐκκλησία is connected with the Israelites’ assembly in the desert as God’s chosen people and it retained a religious nuance even when it was used in the Greek world.

J. Y. Campbell, in contrast, understands ἐκκλησία as a term that simply refers to a general meeting of people. Campbell’s explanation starts with his assumption that Greek-speaking believers in Pauline churches who had realized that Christianity was not just another sect within Judaism began to search for a different designation for their community and found a Greek term, ἐκκλησία. According to Campbell, ἐκκλησία at the time of New Testament in the Greek world referred to any gathering of people: “an assembly of almost any kind could be called an ἐκκλησία.” This concept of an assembly did not refer to a permanent community. “At Athens,” Campbell explains, “the βουλή, or Council, was a body which existed even when it was not actually in session, but there was an ἐκκλησία only when the citizens were actually assembled, and so there was a new ἐκκλησία every time they assembled.”<sup>44</sup> For Campbell, the usage of ἐκκλησία in the Greek world does not clarify the early believers’ adaptation of the term.

Campbell turns his attention to the usage of the term in the Septuagint and investigates the passages where the term is used. He believes that ἐκκλησία is in most cases a translation of a Hebrew term, *qahal* and “*qahal* is used quite freely of gathering of any and every kind.”<sup>45</sup> Therefore the term ἐκκλησία in Septuagint does not carry any sense of “God’s true people,” which has been presupposed by some scholars. Just as

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 206.

<sup>44</sup> J. Y. Campbell, “The Origin and Meaning of the Christian Use of the Word ΕΚΚΛΗΣΙΑ,” in *Three New Testament Studies* (Leiden, Netherlands: E. J. Brill, 1965), 43.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 48.

ἐκκλησία denotes a temporal and one-time gathering of people of any kind in the Greek society, so *qahal* also stops existing when the gathering is over. Campbell's survey of various passages that contain the term, ἐκκλησία leads him to the same conclusion: "The actual use of the word ἐκκλησία in the New Testament affords no support to the view that it expressed the Christians' claim to be the true people of God."<sup>46</sup> The only thing Campbell positively admits is that the "local sense" of ἐκκλησία in the early writings of the New Testament has gained a "catholic sense" in the later writings, when the term refers to the whole believing community.<sup>47</sup>

Robert J. Banks believes that even though the term ἐκκλησία does not carry any inherently religious or cultic meaning, it may refer to a human gathering for a religious purpose and a divinely established assembly. Through his research for the meaning of ἐκκλησία by investigating Greek literature and the Old Testament, Banks comes to the conclusion that ἐκκλησία does not have any "intrinsically religious meaning." It "simply means an assembly or gathering of people in a quite ordinary sense so that, as in Greek usage, it can refer to meetings that are quite secular in character."<sup>48</sup> According to him, it seems quite possible that even before Paul utilized the term, it was already in use to designate a gathering of believers "at least in Hellenistic-Jewish Christian circles." The early believers adopted the term in order to distinguish their meetings not only from Jewish gatherings at the synagogue, but also from Hellenistic cultic ceremonies and political meetings.

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 50.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 52.

<sup>48</sup> Robert J. Banks, *Paul's Idea of Community: The Early House Churches in Their Cultural Setting* (2d ed.; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994), 27-28.

Banks thinks that the first usage of the term by Paul can be seen in the first verse of his letter to the Thessalonians: “τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ Θεσσαλονικέων ἐν θεῷ πατρὶ καὶ κυρίῳ Ἰησοῦ Χριστῷ,” which means when translated: “to the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thess 1:1). He explains that “[t]hough, like other assemblies in the city, it is described as a ‘gathering of the Thessalonians,’ it is marked off from the regular political councils by the addition of the words ‘in God the father’ and from the weekly synagogue meetings by both the use of the term, the *ekklēsia* and the addition of the phrase ‘in the Lord Jesus Christ.’”<sup>49</sup> In Banks’ comprehension, Paul differentiates this gathering of the Thessalonians from other meetings in the society by adding the expression “in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ”: God is therefore implied to be the initiator of the assembly and Jesus Christ is implied to be the means that made such gatherings possible. Therefore, “the *ekklēsia* is not merely a human association, a gathering of like-minded individuals for a religious purpose, but is a divinely created affair.”<sup>50</sup> Banks emphasizes the divine creation of ἐκκλησία as a gathering of people who have experienced God’s love through Christ.

Banks’ explanation is particularly helpful in terms of understanding something special about ἐκκλησία. The divine creation of ἐκκλησία differentiates it from other assemblies in society. The centrality of God’s love through Christ makes ἐκκλησία a new realm. As Campbell ardently asserts, it seems quite possible to say that ἐκκλησία does not inherently carry any religious meaning. It just refers to a gathering of people for various reasons. In this aspect, ἐκκλησία as an association of Christ-believers is not that much

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 29.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 31.

different from other gatherings. It can be, however, a distinctive assembly of believers due to why they get together because of God's love expressed through the death and resurrection of Christ and their experience of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, ἐκκλησία is a new congregation that has been initiated and enabled through the life and death of Christ.

## B. God's Eschatological Reign and Alternative Community

There are several important characteristics in Paul's understanding of ἐκκλησία, as an embodiment of God's καινή κτίσις that scholars emphasize. First, as Samra notes, the church as an assembly of Christ believers is a divine realm where God's eschatological reign is not only presently effective but also fully manifested.<sup>51</sup> It is a tangible organization manifesting God's eschatological ruling in the midst of earthly powers. As Banks mentions,<sup>52</sup> ἐκκλησία is not a term that Paul has created; early believers had already adopted the term and used it to describe the nature of their group. Yet in Gal 1:13, when Paul talks about the early church that he violently persecuted and was trying to destroy, he describes it as a possession of God, “τὴν ἐκκλησίαν τοῦ θεοῦ.” Though this expression, Paul implies that ἐκκλησία as a gathering of believers is something that belongs to God. The possessive expression hints that God is the initiator and the center of the meeting. The purpose of the assembly should be to worship God because it is a special location where God should be glorified. It is a place where participants can experience God's love expressed through Christ and where they have an opportunity to share God's love through the table fellowship, which should be performed

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<sup>51</sup> Samra explains, “As the body of Christ, the church is the manifestation in this world of the cosmic realm in which Christ is Lord because it is a manifestation of Christ himself.” Samra, *Being Conformed*, 134.

<sup>52</sup> Banks, *Paul's Idea of Community*, 27-28.

in remembrance of Christ's last supper with his disciples. In this community of believers, participants find a new identity and sense of belonging in Christ. As mentioned above, in this new assembly, the various distinctions such as ethnic, social, and gender differences become meaningless.

Second, as other scholars emphasize, the church as a divine realm for God's eschatological reign is an alternative community through which God is establishing a new world. Thus, several scholars have noticed that in Paul's understanding ἐκκλησία is an alternative society where God's new world not only can be tasted but also fully experienced. Richard Horsley describes how Paul has tried to establish "the assembly of saints" which is "a community of a new society alternative to the dominant imperial society" in 1 Corinthians.<sup>53</sup> According to him, Paul created "a network of smaller household-based communities" as a social movement that spread from Corinth into the area of Achaia. "Independence" and "autonomy" permitted the movement to maintain "ethical purity"—proper behaviors—and to keep internal disputes within the community without consulting with the established courts of the Roman Empire. The members of the community also cut themselves off from "participation in the fundamental forms of social relations in the dominant society"<sup>54</sup> such as imperial festivals and sacrificial banquets.

Paul tries to establish a new economic order through his project of the "Jerusalem

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<sup>53</sup> Richard A. Horsley, "1 Corinthians: A Case Study of Paul's Assembly as an Alternative Society," in *Paul and Empire: Religion and Power in Roman Imperial Society* (ed. Richard Horsley; Harrisburg, Pennsylvania: Trinity Press, 1997), 244.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 247.



collection.”<sup>55</sup> Paul emphasizes the solidarity of his churches, which have maintained identity in the midst of the Roman Empire.

Brad Braxton also regards ἐκκλησία as Paul’s alternative community. He believes that the church is a “special community created by the Christ event.” For Paul this alternative community where mutuality and humility are emphasized is drastically different from “the dominant communities of the Roman Empire,” which are thirsty for “honor and power.”<sup>56</sup> Beker, in a similar line of thought, argues that “the church signifies the dawning of the new world of God in the midst of the old age and is like a heavenly vanguard that fights against the forces of evil.”<sup>57</sup> If the coming of Christ could be understood as a “divine invasion” into the present evil world for a confrontation with the malicious powers in “an apocalyptic war,”<sup>58</sup> the church is continuing the war against those powers in order to accomplish what Christ has already started.

The church as an alternative community in the society is carrying out a difficult mission. It should tear down the enslaving powers expressed in the oppressive and hierarchical social structures of “the present evil world.” It should also establish God’s new social order in the present world for those who are living in it. As a result, as explained by Beker, “the church lives in a continuous tension between being for the world and being against the world.”<sup>59</sup> The targets of its offensive and prophetic actions are the evil and enslaving powers and repressive social systems. However, the ultimate

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<sup>55</sup> Paul’s Jerusalem collection will be fully described in the seventh chapter.

<sup>56</sup> Brad Braxton, *Preaching Paul* (Nashville: Abindon Press, 2004), 60-61.

<sup>57</sup> Beker, *The Triumph of God*, 29.

<sup>58</sup> Martyn, *Galatians*, 565.

<sup>59</sup> Beker, *The Triumph of God*, 29.

purpose of ἐκκλησία as an alternative community is not for the complete destruction of the world but for the radical renewal of it. The mission for the church, therefore, is twofold: First, it should overcome the evil powers that attempt to enslave people and other creations. Second, it should establish God's new social order in the midst of the present world by its boundary-breaking ministry and proclaiming God's καινή κτίσις.

### Conclusion

I have attempted to present a variety of scholarly understandings of Paul's new creation in Galatians and of his presentation of ἐκκλησία. From the perspective of the needs of the Korean immigrant church in North America, it is particularly significant that by declaring his crucifixion to κόσμος, Paul critiques the old world, which he calls "the present evil age," where religious and ethnic differentiations are considered essential and where oppressive and hierarchical social systems are fully adopted as normative. Following his negative judgment of κόσμος, Paul introduces God's new creation, καινή κτίσις, as the positive counterpart. Christ's death and resurrection have initiated God's new world and in this world various forms of boundaries and differentiations, such as ethnic distinction between Jew and Greek, social class gaps between slave and free, and gender differences between male and female, are no longer valid. In Paul's understanding, God's new creation is not an abstract concept but a tangible reality, which is embodied in a community of believers, ἐκκλησία. Even though the term, ἐκκλησία, does not carry any inherently religious meaning, Paul creatively uses it to refer to an assembly of believers that God has created in Christ. The church is a divine realm where God's eschatological reign is fully manifested. At the same time, it is an alternative community through which

God is transforming and replacing the present evil world. The church exists in tension with the current world: for the world and at the same time against the world.

As I mentioned earlier, the main weakness of the Korean immigrant church in the United States is its lack of social responsibility in terms of challenging the oppressive social systems and transforming them with the vision of God's new world. I have already raised a question in the third chapter: "Why did the Korean ethnic church fail to play a pivotal role of leadership, when it was urgently needed during and after the Los Angeles riots?" One of the answers could be that the Korean church did not fully understand its role in society as a manifestation of an eschatological new world through which God not only wants to use the church to break down oppressive evil powers in the form of racism and hatred among different social groups, but also wants to establish a more just and peaceful society where all people from different ethnic, social, gender, and religious backgrounds can live in harmony.

Paul's emphasis on the equality and unity of all people in God's new creation also can function as a fundamental critique of the male-centered system of the Korean immigrant church. It has been known that the Korean immigrant church has a hierarchical power structure in which male members often take most of the top leadership positions. Because of the structure, female members can hardly have an opportunity to take influential positions associated with making important decisions in the church, even though they often comprise two thirds of the whole congregation. Female members usually play supportive roles in the church such as teaching the children, cleaning the church, and cooking in the kitchen. In this situation, Korean female immigrants often become a "double minority" because they suffer from both the sexism in their own ethnic

community and racism in the broader society.<sup>60</sup> This creation of a “double minority” is destructive to the immigrant church’s vision of participating in the establishment of God’s new world on American soil.

This hierarchical and male-centered structure is a direct result of the discriminatory values of the conventional Korean society.<sup>61</sup> According to the traditional Korean family system, the eldest male used to represent the household and to make most important decisions. He also took the financial responsibility for the family and exercised enormous power over other family members. Women, on the other hand, were supposed to take a nurturing responsibility such as preparing meals and educating children. Women were expected to follow the eldest male’s decision and to be obedient to him. In this way, traditional Korean society developed an oppressive social structure against women. Unfortunately, the Korean immigrant church has adopted the traditional Korean values without a critical evaluation of them. As a result, the Korean immigrant church still remains as a social institution where women can hardly hold any influential leadership position.

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<sup>60</sup> Soyoung Park, “The Intersection of Religion, Race, Ethnicity, and Gender in the Identity Formation of Korean American Evangelical Woman,” in *Korean Americans and Their Religions: Pilgrims and Missionaries from a Different Shore* (ed. H. Kwon, K. Kim, and R. S. Warner; University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001), 193-208.

<sup>61</sup> As briefly described earlier, many traditional social values of Korean society had been deeply influenced by Neo-Confucianism, which was the ruling ideology of the *Chosun* dynasty. Despite its positive contribution such as emphasis on a holistic understanding of nature and society and on a strong family solidarity, Neo-Confucianism stresses a firm differentiation among the elements of “*yin and yang*” combination. In other words, there is a “distinction” and “order” between light (*yang*) and darkness (*yin*); good and evil; men and women; and parents and children, etc. The emphasis on the “distinction” led the rulers of the *Chosun* dynasty to assign different roles for different social groups: men were supposed to pursue academic knowledge and social skills in order to work for the country by gaining official positions in governmental institutes, while women were expected to learn how to nurture in order to support their male members by taking care of home-related matters. The focus on “order” among personal relationship creates different types of social hierarchy explicitly shown in class divisions by gender, birth, and occupation. See Koo, “The Korean Stratification System,” 36-62.

Paul's declaration of God's new creation where religious, ethnic, and gender differences become meaningless is a significant challenge to the Korean immigrant church where discriminatory structure against women is still valid. In order to fulfill its mission as God's church, an embodiment of the new creation and a divine realm where God's eschatological reign should be manifested, it is imperative for the Korean immigrant church to carry out a self-transformation in terms of overcoming the oppressive and hierarchical structure in which female members continue to be excluded from leadership positions.

## CHAPTER SIX

### NEW CREATION AND POWER DYNAMICS

From the perspective and experience of Korean immigrants in the United States described in earlier chapters, power dynamics are an essential issue. The Los Angeles riots have clearly demonstrated that Korean immigrants are living in a largely interwoven network of power dynamics in American society. It is therefore essential for them to recognize how the establishment of God's new world involves, in one way or another, getting involved in these power dynamics because power dynamics are ubiquitous and are unavoidable realities of our daily lives irrespective of our awareness. Michel Foucault provides an insightful view of power:

Power must be understood in the first instance as the multiplicity of force relations imminent in the sphere in which they operate and which constitute their own organization...*Power is everywhere* not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere...Power is not an institution, and not a structure; neither is it a certain strength we are endowed with; it is the name that one attributes to a complex strategic situation in a particular society.<sup>1</sup>

The early churches were not immune to those realities. Some scholars have closely examined and attempted to understand Paul and his letters focusing on this issue of power dynamics.<sup>2</sup> Paul's letter to the Galatians clearly shows that there were a series of "power-struggles" between Paul and his opponents on various issues including the nature of the

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<sup>1</sup> Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality* (Vol.1, trans. Robert Hurley; New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), 92-93. Emphasis added.

<sup>2</sup> See, Kathy Ehrensperger, *Paul and the Dynamics of Power: Communication and Interaction in the Early Christ-Movement* (London: T&T Clark International, 2007).

“gospel” and “circumcision.”<sup>3</sup> Paul’s words also hint that he might have been in conflict with some people in Jerusalem, possibly those who were in leadership positions.<sup>4</sup> Paul’s effort to embody God’s *καινή κτίσις* in the early churches was not like driving on a well-paved freeway but like walking on a rocky road, fighting with an imperialistic control of Jerusalem through his struggle with opponents in Galatia.

Even though Paul does not speak to his opponents directly, Paul sternly warns the Galatians about the negative influence that his opponents tried to exercise among them. Scholars have easily recognized the polemical tone of the letter, which is implied in Paul’s use of “cursing” language (1:8-9), sharp polemics against the Galatians (“You foolish Galatians,” 3:1), and stern command (“expel the slave and her child,” 4:30). These expressions enable readers to “sense Paul’s emotional state” that he may have wanted “to project to his Galatian readers.”<sup>5</sup> It seems quite possible that Paul was annoyed and disappointed when he was writing the letter to the Galatians.

The discovery of the polemical characteristics of the letter have led scholars to pay attention to the identity of the opponents and their intentions as they strove to understand Paul’s arguments in Galatians.<sup>6</sup> Interpreters’ debates have been focused on the

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<sup>3</sup> See John M. G. Barclay, *Obeying the Truth: A Study of Paul’s Ethics in Galatians* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1988), 36-74.

<sup>4</sup> Detailed descriptions will be provided in following sections.

<sup>5</sup> John C. Hurd, “Reflections Concerning Paul’s ‘Opponents’ in Galatia,” in *Paul and His Opponents* (ed. Stanley Porter; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005), 143.

<sup>6</sup> The reformer John Calvin explains who the opponents were and what they did. In his commentary on Galatians, Calvin identifies Paul’s opponents as “false apostles” who “corrupted the true seed by false and corrupt dogmas” during Paul’s absence from the Galatians churches. Calvin explains that the “false apostles” pretended that “they had received a commission from the apostles” and “took away from Paul the name and authority of apostle.” The purpose of their activity, according to Calvin, “was not only to diminish Paul’s authority, but to place him, as an ordinary member of the flock, far below even the false apostles themselves.” In Calvin’s understanding, there was a power-struggle between Paul and the “false apostles” on the issue of the apostleship and Paul wants to defend his position as a “true apostle” who

identity of the opponents, their messages and intentions, and Paul's reactions to them. In this chapter, I want to inquire into the power dynamics around the Galatian churches with three questions in mind: Who were the opponents? Were they connected to Jerusalem? How did Paul's conviction about *καὴνὴ κτίσις* shape his reactions? I will briefly survey the existing scholarly investigations on those issues. By doing so, I hope to describe the power dynamics related to Paul's effort to establish God's new world in the midst of imperial circumstances.

Scholars who are seeking to understand the historical context that led Paul to write the letter to the Galatians have proposed various interpretations regarding the identity of Paul's opponents and the reasons for their activities in Galatia. There is what can be called the "majority interpretation" in which Paul's opponents were "Jewish Christ-believers" related in some ways to the Jerusalem church. There is also several "minority interpretations," which are no less grounded in textual evidence. According to them, Paul's opponents were "Jewish Christian Gnostics," or two different groups of "Judaizers" and "liberals," or "Gentile Christians" who, after Paul's departure, read the LXX, their Bible. In each case the power dynamics between Paul and the Galatians is understood differently. Interpreters do have a choice between a series of legitimate and plausible interpretations. The question for us is: What is the most helpful interpretation for Korean immigrant Christian believers?

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preaches the gospel of Jesus Christ. John Calvin, *Calvin's New Testament Commentaries: The Epistle of Paul The Apostle to the Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians* (trans. T. H. L. Parker; Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1965), 3-5.



## 1. Understanding Paul's Opponents

### A. Dominant Position

Scholars suggested various ideas about the reasons for the activities of Paul's opponents in Galatia. Technically speaking, there is no consensus among scholars on the identity of Paul's opponents. However, modern scholarship favors one option over other proposals. "The majority of interpreters throughout the twentieth century," according to Jerry Sumney, "identified the opponents of Galatians as emissaries of the Jerusalem church who reject Paul's apostleship and require Gentile believers to observe those elements of Torah."<sup>7</sup> Even though the specific terms to label Paul's opponents are often different,<sup>8</sup> scholars who support this majority opinion often agree on certain characteristics of the opponents: they were "Jewish Christ-believers" who had relationships with the Jerusalem church. They preached the gospel that was very different from that of Paul and emphasized circumcision and the Jewish Law.

F. C. Baur is one of the first modern scholars who have a fully developed proposal regarding the identity of Paul's opponents, describing them as "Jewish

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<sup>7</sup> Jerry Sumney, "Studying Paul's Opponents: Advances and Challenges," in *Paul and His Opponents* (ed. Stanley Porter; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005), 17.

<sup>8</sup> According to Mark Nanos, many "labels" have been used to identify Paul's opponents in Galatia such as "Judaizers," "opponents," "rivals," "agitators," "troublemakers," "teachers," "missionaries," "proselytizers," and "outsiders." His own term is "the influencers." See, Mark Nanos, *The Irony of Galatians: Paul's Letter in First-Century Context* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002), 115-131. About the expression, "Judaizers," which could be the most popular term among interpreters, Richard B. Hays, who prefers to call Paul's opponents "the missionaries" following James D. G. Dunn's usage, makes an interesting remark. He argues that the term, "Judaizers," once popular among scholars lost its favor recently because of two reasons: Firstly, it incorrectly connotes the conflict in the Galatian churches was between Jewish and anti-Jewish factions. Secondly, the Greek verb "to Judaize" (*udaizein*, 2:14) does not mean "to make someone else into a Jew" but "to adopt Jewish practices." That is why he favors the designation, "the missionaries" because it clearly describes the activities of Paul's opponents, preaching "the gospel" and advocating the Law. Richard B. Hays, *The Letter to the Galatians* (NIB XI; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000), 184-85. I simply prefer to call them, "Paul's opponents"/"the opponents" because their own version of "the gospel" was very different from Paul's and they functioned as "opponents" and "rivals" against Paul's teaching and missionary works among the Galatians. Detailed explanations will be provided later.

Christians” who carried out a “judaizing” program among the Galatians. Baur believes that there were two competing mission movements among the early churches: a law-observant Jewish movement led by the leaders of the Jerusalem church, which constituted a “Jewish Christianity” and a law-free Gentile mission by Paul, “Pauline Christianity.” Within “Jewish Christianity” in Jerusalem, there were also two conflicting parties: a strict and a liberal group. The stricter party, the “Pharisaic-minded zealots,” in Baur’s terms, wanted to impose circumcision and observance of the Law on the Gentile believers. The more liberal party to which Peter and other “Jewish Apostles” belonged was in the leadership position and was generous to Paul’s law-free mission and yet tried to avoid conflict with the stricter party. James, who later came to have a more influential role in the Jerusalem church, was in between the two conflicting parties.<sup>9</sup>

Baur designates Paul’s opponents among the Galatian believers as “strange teachers” and “Judaizing opponents.” According to Baur, the opponents came to Galatia and “destroyed the confidence of the Galatians” by asserting that Paul’s gospel was not enough for their salvation. They emphasized the importance of submitting to circumcision as “as a first step to the Christian salvation.” The opponents who were “Jews or Jewish Christians of the genuine old stamp” would have thought “the very ground of their existence was cut from under them if Judaism were no longer to have its absolute power and importance.”<sup>10</sup> That was why they promoted the “judaizing” program and urged the Galatians to accept circumcision as “the most direct and unmistakable

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<sup>9</sup> Ferdinand Christian Baur, *Paul: The Apostle of Jesus Christ, His Life and Work, His Epistles and His Doctrine. A Contribution to a Critical History of Primitive Christianity* (Vol. I, 2d ed., trans. Eduard Zeller,; London: Williams and Norgate, 1876), 105-45.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 250-53.

recognition of the value of the Mosaic law”<sup>11</sup> Despite Baur’s heavy dependency on the perspective of Hegelian dialectics and the historicity of the book of Acts, his understanding of Paul’s opponents as “Jewish Christian Judaizers” associated with the stricter party in the Jerusalem church has been widely accepted by many interpreters and been a foundation for the dominant position among Pauline scholars.

John Bligh explains that Paul’s opponents could be labeled as “false teachers” and “extremist Judaizers” and they were “Christian Jews from Jerusalem, probably converted Pharisees.”<sup>12</sup> Hans Dieter Betz argues that Paul’s opponents’ historical predecessors were “the faction at the Jerusalem conference” and were “Jewish-Christian missionaries rivaling Paul.” Paul’s opponents did not follow the agreement made at the conference by crossing the boundary of Judaism in order to make “converts among the Gentile Christian churches founded by Paul.” Their “different gospel,” however, was persuasive enough to make the Galatians accept their teachings about Torah and circumcision.<sup>13</sup>

F. F. Bruce attempts to reconstruct the opponents’ arguments. According to him, the main challenge of the opponents related to Paul’s authority and his arbitrary selectivity in terms of following only certain Jewish customs. They attacked Paul for not having the authority that the leaders of the Jerusalem church had. While the leaders received their authority directly from Christ, Paul’s commission was derived from himself (from his own experience and claims). While the leaders observed and emphasized Jewish laws and rituals like the circumcision, Paul omitted circumcision and

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 256. Baur regards only four epistles such as Galatians, 1 and 2 Corinthians, and Romans as the authentic writings of Paul. He also argues that Paul’s opponents in Galatians were the same “judaizing opponents” among the Corinthians.

<sup>12</sup> John Bligh, *Galatians: A Discussion of St Paul’s Epistle* (London: St Paul Publications, 1970), 26-35.

<sup>13</sup> Hans Dieter Betz, *Galatians* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 7-9.

other customs that his Jewish ancestors had observed. Against those accusations, Paul replied that his gospel came directly from the divine revelation, commissioned by Christ, and the leaders of Jerusalem recognized his gospel for Gentiles because in essence his gospel was the same as theirs, despite differences in practical implications.<sup>14</sup>

J. Louis Martyn prefers to call the opponents “the Teachers” and proposes his own understanding of their identity and of what they did among the Galatians. According to him, they were “outsiders” since Paul uses the third person to speak about them.<sup>15</sup> His usage of the third person indicates that they were outsiders who recently arrived in the Galatian churches. They were “Christian-Jewish evangelists” who designated their message as “the gospel,” the good news of God for Gentiles.<sup>16</sup> The opponents explained to the Galatians that the Law was the basic core of the good news for the Gentiles and wanted to correct Paul’s law-free mission. They emphasized circumcision as an essential part for becoming God’s people and as the commencement of the Law observance. They identified themselves as “descendants of Abraham” and asserted that those who received circumcision and observed the law could be true children of Abraham.<sup>17</sup> They had a slogan: “Jerusalem is our mother.”<sup>18</sup> In short, Martyn identifies Paul’s opponents as

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<sup>14</sup> F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (New International Greek Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1982), 25-27.

<sup>15</sup> Paul uses the third person for the opponents (1:7; 3:1; 4:17; 5:7-12; 6:12-13) and second for the Galatians (1:6, 11; 3:1; 4:12).

<sup>16</sup> J. Louis Martyn, “A Law-Observant Mission to Gentiles,” in *The Galatians Debate: Contemporary Issues in Rhetorical and Historical Interpretation* (ed. Mark D. Nanos; Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson Publishers, 2002), 352-53; repr. from *Theological Issues in the Letters of Paul* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1997).

<sup>17</sup> J. Louis Martyn, *Galatians* (AB 33A; New York: Doubleday, 1997), 117-126.

<sup>18</sup> About this “slogan” and Paul’s reinterpretation of it will be discussed later.

“Christian-Jewish evangelists” who proclaimed their own version of “the gospel” among the Galatians.<sup>19</sup>

Through his own methodology of “mirror-reading,”<sup>20</sup> John Barclay wants to approach the issue of Paul’s opponents in Galatians with evidence that he categorizes into six groups: “certain,” “highly probable,” “probable,” “possible,” “conceivable,” and “incredible.” According to Barclay, some characters of the opponents are certain: they were Christians and asked the Galatians to be circumcised and observe the Law; they questioned Paul’s apostleship and the adequacy of his gospel; and their arguments were very persuasive for the Galatians. Several features –e.g., they were Jewish and used the Abraham story from the Scripture –Barclay rates as “highly probable.” He puts the possibility that they had some connections with the Jerusalem church in the category of “probable.”<sup>21</sup>

Although scholars hold various opinions on detailed information such as the slogans and biblical narratives the opponents might have used,<sup>22</sup> many scholars basically agree on several major elements of the opponents. They were “outsiders,” “Jews,” and

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<sup>19</sup> Hays also believes that Paul’s opponents were Jewish Christians who were preachers of “the gospel” and advocates of the Law. Hays, *Galatians*, 185.

<sup>20</sup> It is a method to read the Galatian text as a mirror, which reflects what is going on in Galatian churches. See John M. G. Barclay, “Mirror-Reading A Polemical Letter,” in *The Galatians Debate: Contemporary Issues in Rhetorical and Historical Interpretation* (ed. Mark D. Nanos; Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson Publishers, 2002), 367-378; repr. from *JSNT* 31 (1987).

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 380.

<sup>22</sup> Howard basically believes that Paul’s opponents were “Jewish Christian judaizers from Jerusalem” and forced the Gentile believers in Galatia to be circumcised and to observe the Law. He, however, suggests a very interesting argument: “Thus it is possible that the opponents did not charge Paul outright but in a very clever way undermined his authority indirectly. Moreover, it is possible even to go further and argue that the opponents did not charge Paul at all, directly or indirectly, but actually considered him to teach circumcision as they themselves did and in fact treated him as an ally.” George Howard, *Paul: Crisis in Galatia. A Study in Early Christian Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 8-9.

“Christ-believers” who preached their own version of the gospel in Galatia. They requested that the Gentile believers accept circumcision as an essential part of the Law and a visible sign that God’s people should have. They raised a question about Paul’s apostleship and attacked his gospel as something not complete.<sup>23</sup> Their arguments were attractive and successful among the Galatians and some of them began to practice what they had learned from the opponents. Such is the dominant understanding that has been adopted by many commentators.

## B. Minority Understandings

Not all interpreters have agreed with the dominant understanding of Paul’s opponents in Galatia. Many scholars have challenged it with new proposals. One group of scholars has suggested a theory according to which Paul was fighting against two different groups of opponents, the “twofold battlefront” hypothesis. According to James H. Ropes, who has developed Wilhelm Lütgert’s original argument,<sup>24</sup> in his letter to the Galatians Paul argues against attacks not only from Judaizers, but also from liberals. The Judaizers criticized Paul for not fully accepting “Hebraic elements” and attacked him as being “no regular apostle.”<sup>25</sup> The liberals, on the other hand, often “exaggerated one element in Paul’s teaching” such as freedom in the Spirit and did not want to “bear the

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<sup>23</sup> Longenecker argues that the opponents “might have conceived of their efforts as bringing to completion what Paul’s ministry started.” Bruce W. Longenecker, *The Triumph of Abraham’s God: The Transformation of Identity in Galatians* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998), 29.

<sup>24</sup> Wilhelm Lütgert, *Gesetz und Geist: Eine Untersuchung zur Vorgeschichte des Galaterbriefes* (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1919).

<sup>25</sup> James H. Ropes, *The Singular Problem of the Epistle to the Galatians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1929), 26.

common burden” that the church members should share.<sup>26</sup> They accused Paul for moving back from the principles of the gospel because of the influence of the apostles in Jerusalem.<sup>27</sup> Ropes clarifies the identity of the Judaizers as not being “the Jewish Christian Judaizers from Jerusalem” but “Judaizing gentile Christians” who were influenced by Jews from the local synagogues in Galatia and “had tried to persuade the [Galatian] churches as a whole to accept Jewish rites, including circumcision.”<sup>28</sup>

Walter Schmithals has challenged Lütgert and Ropes’ understanding of Paul’s opponents. In order to understand Paul’s opponents whom he calls “the heretics,” Schmithals makes two presuppositions. First, he presupposes that there was a single battle line not two. By so doing he rejects the “twofold battlefront” hypothesis. Second, he assumes that Paul “was only meagerly informed about goings-on in Galatia.” With these two presuppositions, Schmithals approaches Paul’s texts from the perspective of the Gnostic influence on the early Christianity. He finally reaches his own conclusion for Paul’s opponents in Galatia: They were Jewish Christian Gnostics.<sup>29</sup>

Johannes Munck joins other scholars of the minority understanding by proposing that Paul’s opponents were “Gentile Christians.” According to Munck, the opponents were those who had learned from Paul and became believers during his ministry in Galatia. The Galatians used the Greek translation of the Old Testament as their Bible and learned from it that God took care of the Israelites. After a certain amount of time, Paul departed for another region for new church planting and they were left with the Bible and

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 42.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 45.

<sup>29</sup> Walter Schmithals, *Paul & the Gnostics* (trans. John E. Steely; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1972), 58-64.

kept reading it. From their reading, the Galatians supposed that “God required of his people that they should be circumcised and observe everything that had had commanded in his Law.”<sup>30</sup> Their own reading of the Bible led them to believe that they are just adding something God required for God’s people to Paul’s teachings. As a result, they became “Judaizers.” From Paul’s perspective, their reading was a misreading.

In order to justify his proposal, Munck pays attention to the present participle with an article in Gal 6:13, οἱ περιτεμνόμενοι. According to Munck’s argument, “the present participle in the middle voice of περιτέμνω never means ‘those who belong to the circumcision,’” but refers to “those who receive circumcision.” The expression, οἱ περιτεμνόμενοι in Gal 6:13 therefore should be understood in this way.<sup>31</sup> On the basis of this reading, Munck asserts that Paul’s opponents were not those who already belonged to a Jewish group but those who got through the process of circumcision recently. Paul’s opponents, the agitating Judaizers, therefore, were Gentile Christians who had newly submitted themselves to circumcision.

Recently Mark Nanos has reignited the debate on the identity of Paul’s opponents in Galatia by offering his own understanding of Paul’s opponents. Nanos proposes to call them “the influencers” because, in his view, they did not oppose Paul and his gospel. Instead they “completed” Paul’s gospel by teaching the Galatians about circumcision and about the observance of the Mosaic Law. According to Nanos, “the influencers” were “members of the larger Jewish communities of Galatia entrusted with the responsibility of conducting Gentiles wishing more than guest status within the communities through

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<sup>30</sup> Johannes Munck, *Paul and the Salvation of Mankind* (Richmond, Va.: John Knox Press, 1959), 87

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 89.



the ritual process of proselyte conversion by which this is accomplished.”<sup>32</sup> They were proselytes, former Gentiles. They wanted to assist Paul’s Gentile congregations who were regarded as a subgroup of the larger Jewish community to be fully accepted by the Jews and “to gain indisputable status among the righteous ones”<sup>33</sup> through circumcision and observance of the Law.

Those minority interpretations often deny one or more of the three basic elements of the dominant position’s definition of the opponents as “Jewish-Christ believers-outsiders.” Although the minority positions have not gained wide supports from other scholars, they have made some contributions to our understanding of the opponents by showing the “gaps” that one finds both in Paul’s letter to Galatians and in the majority’s interpretation. Minority interpretations have tried to fill these gaps by proposing new possibilities. Their efforts have widened the scope of our comprehension of Paul’s opponents in Galatia.

### C. Identity of Paul’s Opponents and Korean Immigrants

How can we understand Paul’s opponents, keeping in mind the power dynamics in which Korean immigrants are embroiled? This is the question that I have in mind as I investigate the identity of Paul’s opponents in Galatians. Paul’s own words in the letter to Galatians reveal various hints regarding the identity of the opponents and their arguments. Paul opens his attack on the opponents by talking about a “different gospel” (ἕτερον εὐαγγέλιον, 1:6). He considers their gospel as “different,” because it contrasts with what

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<sup>32</sup> Nanos, *The Irony of Galatians*, 6.

<sup>33</sup> Mark Nanos, “The Inter- and Intra-Jewish Political Context of Paul’s Letter to the Galatians,” in *Paul and Politics* (ed. Richard Horsley; Harrisburg, Penn.: Trinity Press International, 2000), 146.

he preached to the Galatians (1:8) and what the Galatians received from him (1:9). In Paul's judgment, what the opponents have done is "preaching a gospel," which is quite different from what he have taught the Galatians. What the opponents proclaimed actually perverted "the gospel of Christ" (τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ Χριστοῦ) and by so doing, they disturbed the Galatian believers. Paul's use of the noun, εὐαγγέλιον and verb, εὐαγγελίζω implies that the opponents may have called their teaching a "gospel," possibly a more "complete gospel," which is different from Paul's "incomplete gospel." Paul's gospel is "incomplete," because it lacks an important element, circumcision. If the opponents preached a gospel, even though it perverted "the gospel of Christ," they could still be identified as "Christ-believers."<sup>34</sup>

Paul, despite his opponents' various attacks on his ministry, has a firm conviction<sup>35</sup> about the power of "the gospel of Christ" that he preaches among the Gentiles. He emphasizes that he has preached the gospel<sup>36</sup> not in word only but in power and the Holy Spirit: "For our gospel did not come to you in word (λόγῳ) only, but also in power (δυνάμει) and in the Holy Spirit (πνεύματι ἁγίῳ) and with full conviction (πληροφορία πολλῇ)" (1 Thessalonians 1:5). Paul's conviction of the power of the gospel

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<sup>34</sup> According to Jewett's explanation, the opponents' desire to avoid persecution because of the cross of Christ significantly reveals "their Christian origin." Robert Jewett, "The Agitators and the Galatian Congregation," in *The Galatians Debate: Contemporary Issues in Rhetorical and Historical Interpretation* (ed. Mark D. Nanos; Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson Publishers, 2002), 337; repr. from *New Testament 17* (1970-1971).

<sup>35</sup> According to Patte, conviction is "a self-evident truth," which has power over us enough to "cause us to act in certain ways." Daniel Patte, *Paul's Faith and the Power of the Gospel: A Structural Introduction to the Pauline Letters* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), 10-13.

<sup>36</sup> In Patte's understanding, if "a conviction is a self-evident truth," the Gospel is "a system of convictions." Ibid., 55. According to Elliott, in the imperial context of the Roman Empire, the same term, *euangelion*, "gospel" was used to mention "an element of imperial propaganda, referring to announcements of the emperor's victories and accession." Neil Elliott, *The Arrogance of Nations: Reading Romans in the Shadow of Empire* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008), 44.

implies God's divine intervention in his proclamation.<sup>37</sup> The purpose of God's salvific intervention in Paul's ministry is to save the Gentiles who have been enslaved under their "idolatrous Hellenistic system of convictions"<sup>38</sup>

Another important expression for the identity of the opponents is οἱ περιτεμνόμενοι in 6:13. This present participle is often used as an evidence for the identity of Paul's opponents. As mentioned earlier, Munck who regards the opponents as "Gentile Christians" argues that the present participle in the middle voice of περιτέμνω means "those who receive circumcision." Charles Talbert also pays attention to this participle and argues, "[t]he evidence of Gal. 6:3 indicates that Paul's opponents were not even Jews, but rather Gentiles. At least the most natural reading of the present participle (οἱ περιτεμνόμενοι) points in this direction."<sup>39</sup> Robert Jewett, on the contrary, explains that Paul is using the present participle not because the opponents themselves are getting through the process of circumcision, but because they are now demanding circumcision for Gentile believers: "[g]iven the length of time required for circumcision, it is hard to visualize the present tense being used to describe the actions of the leading Judaizers in circumcising themselves, but it is natural to use the present tense to depict their current advocacy of circumcision."<sup>40</sup> Those different understandings of the participle, each well-grounded in textual evidence, require us to make our own decision based on both our reading of the text and the contextual concerns we have concerning the needs of Korean immigrants.

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<sup>37</sup> Patte, *Paul's Faith*, 132.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 293-94.

<sup>39</sup> Charles H. Talbert, "Again: Paul's visits to Jerusalem," *Novum Testamentum*, Vol. 9 (Jan. 1967): 27-8.

<sup>40</sup> Jewett, "The Agitators," 338.

In my opinion, following Jewett, the present participle refers to the original group where the opponents belonged to instead of denoting what happened to them recently. It seems natural to translate the present participle into “those who are circumcised,” or “the circumcised,” denoting a certain characteristic of the people. One of the major traits of the people described in 6:13 is that they were circumcised ones. The status of being circumcised shows who they were, in others words, which group they were belonging to instead of indicating what happened to them such as being circumcised newly. The participle suggests that they were a part of the group that could be identified with the mark of circumcision on their body, ethnic Jews.

In sum, careful reading of Paul’s texts confirms that it is legitimate and plausible to identify Paul’s opponents as “Christ-believing Jews” who preached their own version of gospel, which was different from that of Paul, particularly in terms of emphasizing circumcision and observance of the Law.<sup>41</sup> My concluding choice of identifying Paul’s opponents as “Christ-believing Jews” is closely related to my interpretive strategy in which I hope to connect Paul’s opponents with the nomistic faction in Jerusalem, which allows me to inquire into the broader picture of the power dynamics among Paul, his opponents, and Jerusalem that seeks to exercise an “imperial” control on other churches that Paul established.

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<sup>41</sup> Weima argues that there are four contrasts between Paul and his opponents when one investigates the concluding part of the letter (6:11-18). They are (1) boasting in the circumcision of Galatians (vv. 12,13) versus boasting only in the cross of Christ (v. 14); (2) avoiding persecution for the cross versus accepting persecution for the cross (v. 17); (3) compelling Galatians to be circumcised (vv. 12,13) versus claiming that circumcision or uncircumcision does not matter (v. 15); (4) living in the “world” (v. 14) under its powers versus living in the “new creation” (v. 15) under the lordship of Christ. See Jefferey A. D. Weima, “Gal. 6:11-18: A Hermeneutical Key to the Galatian Letter,” *CTJ* 28 (1993): 94

## 2. Paul's Opponents and Jerusalem

There is one more important thing that should be mentioned in order to have a more precise picture of power dynamics between Paul and the Galatian churches: Paul's opponents' relationship to Jerusalem. Some scholars believe that there was a strong connection between Jerusalem and the opponents, while others doubt about the connection. In this section, we will focus on the relationship between Paul's opponents and Jerusalem.

### A. Scholarly Suggestions

Those who hold on to the minority opinions of the identity of Paul's opponents often assert that there was no link between them and Jerusalem.<sup>42</sup> In most cases, those who share the majority interpretation of Paul's opponents usually suppose that a certain powerful group in the Jerusalem church was associated with them. There is however an exception.

For example, even though Barclay admits that the importance of Jerusalem in the letter "probably indicates that they had some links with the Jerusalem church," he denies any direct relationship between Paul's opponents and any group in Jerusalem and Antioch: "It would certainly be going beyond the evidence to identify them with the "false brethren" at Jerusalem...or the circumcision party at Antioch...It is inconceivable that 'the Pillars' had actually commissioned Paul's opponents."<sup>43</sup> He strongly criticizes

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<sup>42</sup> For example, Ropes who believes that the Judaizers were local "Gentile Christians" who were influenced by Jews in local synagogue argues, "the ultimate origin of the Judaizing influences had nothing to do with Jerusalem." Ropes, *Singular Problem*, 45.

<sup>43</sup> Barclay, "Mirror-Reading," 380.

the idea that Paul's opponents were from Jerusalem, especially the view that they were sent by James. According to him, it is "most unlikely that they were sent by James with the explicit purpose of making Paul's converts Judaize."<sup>44</sup> Barclay's arguments are, however, somewhat conflicting. If the opponents were connected neither to the false brethren, possibly the stricter party, nor to the "pillar" apostles, particularly James, what would the "some links" that the opponents had with the Jerusalem church refer to?

Since F. C. Baur has asserted that there was a stricter party of "Pharisaic-minded zealots" in the Jerusalem church who wanted to impose circumcision and observance of the Law on the Gentile believers, scholars have proposed various ideas about the group that was related to Paul's opponents in Galatia. In understanding Paul's opponents in Galatia, Nicholas Taylor has suggested an interesting picture of power dynamics. Taylor emphasizes the importance of the agreement between Paul and the "pillar" Apostles of the Jerusalem church, which was symbolized by the term, *κοινωνία*.<sup>45</sup> In his opinion, there was a firm unity between Paul and the Apostles in Jerusalem, which undermines the possibility that Paul's opponents in Galatian churches had a direct association with them. The opponents, rather, were connected to the nomistic faction within the Jerusalem church. The people in the faction abused Peter's absence from the Jerusalem church and increased their pressure on James to send the delegation to Antioch. In this respect, Paul

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<sup>44</sup> Barclay, *Obeying the Truth*, 44. n.18.

<sup>45</sup> Taylor regards the apostolic authority of the Jerusalem church leaders as an important source for Paul's own authority. According to Taylor, the apostleship was a central topic of Galatians and Paul's apostleship was somewhat on crisis. Since Jerusalem church leaders acknowledged Paul's apostleship, he could enjoy greater authority than his opponents. N. H. Taylor, "Apostolic Identity and the Conflicts in Corinth and Galatia," in *Paul and His Opponents* (ed. Stanley Porter; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005), 99-123.

was fighting against a resurgence of the nomistic party that attempted to show the authority of the Jerusalem church by imposing Jewish dietary regulations on them.<sup>46</sup>

J. Louis Martyn argues that there were two distinct groups in the Jerusalem church. Recognized leaders like Peter, James, and John were in a one group and the other group consisted of people whom Paul calls, “the false brothers,” who wanted to impose circumcision and observance of the Jewish Law on the Gentile believers. The false brothers came to have many followers and constituted a party, “the circumcision party,” and took the control of it and expanded their “law-observant mission to Gentiles.” As Peter departed from Jerusalem and James had increased his influence in the Jerusalem church, the false brothers approached James and persuaded him<sup>47</sup> to send a delegation to the Antioch church where Paul was successfully practicing his own “law-free mission to the Gentiles.” James agreed with the false brothers and sent a delegation to the Antioch church and their mission was successful in terms that Cephas and Barnabas who joined at the eating table with Gentile believers withdrew from it and Paul was isolated from the Antioch community. The delegation’s “victorious” report may have pleased James and led him to “have been open to the further suggestions from” the false brothers and to send possibly another delegation to the Galatian churches. Even though it is not easy to make sure whether the Jerusalem church “had fallen under the influence of the False brothers”<sup>48</sup> or not, it seems quite possible that the opponents claimed their connection

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<sup>46</sup> Nicholas Taylor, *Paul, Antioch, and Jerusalem: A Study in Relationships and Authority in Earliest Christianity* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992), 128-39 and 170-76.

<sup>47</sup> Taylor also believes that James sent the delegation to Antioch because of “the pressure from the nomistic faction within the Jerusalem church.” Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> J. Louis Martyn, *Theological Issues in the Letters of Paul* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1997), 25-32.

with a powerful faction in the Jerusalem church and they used the authority of the Jerusalem church to proclaim their own version of gospel.

Recently, Ian Elmer has attempted to elucidate the close relationship between Paul's opponents in Galatia and the pillar apostles of the Jerusalem church, particularly the "James party." Similar to F. C. Baur's position, Elmer believes that there were two conflicting mission movements in the primitive churches. According to him, the conflict between "the Hellenists" and "the Hebrews" in the early Jerusalem church had resulted in the creation of two competing forms of mission groups: the mission of "a law-observant Christian Judaism" centered in Jerusalem and led by the "pillar apostles" who continued to keep the Jewish traditions and customs; and the mission of "a law-free Christianity" developed in Syrian Antioch with members of the Jewish diaspora and Jewish Christ believers who first attempted to convert Gentiles without requiring circumcision and other Jewish regulations.<sup>49</sup>

According to Elmer, when James came to the position of authority in the Jerusalem church, he began to send a delegation to Antiochene community to impose a strict Law-observance on the Gentile believers. James' effort was successful and when Paul resisted, he "found himself marginalized and forced to leave Antioch"<sup>50</sup> to find other opportunities to continue his own law-free mission among the Gentiles. Elmer argues that the people from the James party in Jerusalem who had operated a successful campaign in Antioch eventually moved to the Galatian churches that Paul had established and nurtured.

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<sup>49</sup> Ian J. Elmer, *Paul, Jerusalem and the Judaizers: The Galatian Crisis in Its Broadest Historical Context* (Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), 80.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 116.



Elmer identifies Paul's opponents in Galatia as "Christian Jews" from Jerusalem who preached "a law-observant gospel." The opponents had two main sources for their activities in Galatia: Scripture and the apostolic authority of the Jerusalem church leaders. According to Elmer, they emphasized the importance of circumcision as a marker of God's chosen people, the children of Abraham, by telling and interpreting the stories in Scripture about Abraham and his two wives and sons (Gal 3:6-29; 4:21-31). They also had support in Jerusalem from prominent figures such as James, Peter, and the Jerusalem church and relied on this support to attempt to undermine Paul's authority as an apostle.

Paul's opponents had a direct relationship with the delegation from Jerusalem in Antioch, because, in Elmer's judgment, Paul was fighting "a war against a single group of adversaries whose origins must be attributed to the circumcision party around James at Jerusalem."<sup>51</sup> The opponents wanted to diminish Paul's missionary achievements and disturb the Galatian believers by preaching "a law-observant gospel," which imposed circumcision and strict observance of Jewish regulations on the Gentile believers and by raising questions about the validity of Paul's teachings and his right to be an apostle. By so doing, they wanted to bring those Gentile believing communities "under the authority of Jerusalem."<sup>52</sup>

Elmer's reconstruction of the historical situation among the early churches in Jerusalem, Antioch, and Galatia is helpful to understand the power dynamics among the early churches, particularly between Paul and the Jerusalem church authority. Influential leaders in the Jerusalem church wanted to put the newly established Gentile churches in

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 161.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 162, 212, and 215.

Asia Minor under their own authority by sending delegations to impose circumcision and Law-observance upon them.

## B. Jerusalem and Imperial Attempt to Control

As briefly mentioned earlier, Paul's use of third person for the opponents (1:7; 3:1; 4:17; 5:7-12; 6:12-13) and second person for the Galatians (1:6, 11; 3:1; 4:12) can be understood as a signal that the opponents were a different group of people who came from outside. If they were from outside of Galatia, the possible place for their origin could be Jerusalem. If the opponents were connected to Jerusalem, what kind of evidence can we find in the letter?

One evidence that helps us understand the connection between the opponents and Jerusalem,<sup>53</sup> would be Paul's use of several terms related to "slavery" and "freedom."<sup>54</sup> When Paul talks about Abraham and reinterprets the story of Abraham's two sons in chapter four, he intensively uses "slavery language." Paul's rereading of the story of Abraham's two sons, which the Galatian believers may have heard from the opponents, must be investigated in order to comprehend Paul's use of "slavery" language and Paul's attitude toward Jerusalem.

Paul critiques Jerusalem for promoting slavery by associating it with a slave woman, Hagar. He begins his own interpretation of Abraham's story by challenging the

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<sup>53</sup> According to Martyn's explanation, Paul does not utilize the term "Jerusalem" in order to refer to the Jewish religion. His use of the term is a "metonym for the Jerusalem church." See Martyn, *Galatians*, 458-59.

<sup>54</sup> The "slavery" terms include: 1) καταδουλόω ("make a slave of," 2:4); 2) δοῦλος (a slave, 1:10; 3:28; 4:1,7); 3) δουλόω ("enslave" or "make a slave": 4:3); 4) δουλεύω ("be a slave" or "be enslaved," 4:8, 9, 25; 5:13); 5) παιδίσκη (a slave woman, 4:22, 23, 30, 30, 31). "Freedom" words: 1) ἐλεύθερος (a free person, 3:28; 4:22, 23, 26, 30, 31); 2) ἐλευθερία (freedom, 2:4; 5:1, 13\*2 ); 3) ἐλευθερώ (set free, 5:1).

Galatians who tried to be subjected to the Law (4:21). Then, he provides general information that Abraham had two sons, one from a slave woman and the other from a free one (4:22). Paul points out that the child by the slave woman was born “according to the flesh” (κατὰ σάρκα) and the one by the free woman was born “through the promise” (δι' ἐπαγγελίας, 4:23). By juxtaposing the two words, ἐπαγγελία (promise)<sup>55</sup> and σάρξ (flesh),<sup>56</sup> Paul suggests that they are opposite ideas.<sup>57</sup> Paul’s opponents might have taught the Galatians that Sarah gave birth to Isaac as a result of God’s promise for Abraham and they, as ethnic Jews, became true heirs of that promise by receiving circumcision and keeping the Law like Isaac. If that was the case, Paul turns the opponents’ explanation dramatically through his reinterpretation of Abraham’s story. He utilizes the image of Mount Sinai where the Israelites who had been freed from their enslaved status in Egypt received the Law as God’s children. He connects this image with the slave woman, Hagar. By associating Mount Sinai with Hagar, Paul argues that the holy mountain where the freed Israelites accepted the Law as God’s children is now bearing the children of slavery.

Paul’s usage of “slavery” implies the possible connection between the opponents and Jerusalem. In 4:25, Paul argues that Hagar, the slave woman “corresponds to the present Jerusalem, because she is enslaved with her children.” This verse is Paul’s fundamental critique of current Jerusalem, possibly the faction in the Jerusalem church

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<sup>55</sup> Paul uses the term, ἐπαγγελία frequently in chapter three and four (3:14, 16, 17, 18\*2, 21, 22, 29; 4:23, 28),

<sup>56</sup> The term, σάρξ appears through out all chapters (1:16; 2:16, 20; 3:3; 4:13, 14, 23, 29; 5:13, 16, 17\*2, 19, 24; 6:8\*2, 12, 13).

<sup>57</sup> Paul later fully develops his idea of the dichotomic relationship between the Spirit and the flesh. He argues, “for the flesh desires against the Spirit and the Spirit desires against the flesh, because these are opposed to each other” (5:17). For detail explanation about the oppositional relationship between the flesh and the Spirit, see Rodrigo J. Morales, *The Spirit and the Restoration of Israel* (Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 140-63.

that was responsible for sending the delegation to Galatia. Paul's usage of the "slavery," δουλεύω in 4:25 seems to be linked with καταδουλόω in 2:4 where Paul accuses the "false brothers"<sup>58</sup> who secretly brought in for slipping in "to spy on the freedom that we have in Christ Jesus, so that they could enslave us." Paul's mention of a failed attempt to compel Titus, an uncircumcised Greek Gentile believer who traveled to Jerusalem with Paul and Barnabas, to be circumcised in 2:3 and Paul's critique of the false brothers who tried to enslave "us" in 2:4 imply that the false brothers enforced Titus to get circumcision.<sup>59</sup> Scholars often believe that Paul adopted military terms and images to describe the false brothers and their attempt to impose circumcision on Titus.<sup>60</sup> In this aspect, Paul's struggle against the false brothers was very intense and hostile. Paul considers the aggressive action of the false brothers as an effort to "enslave us." The image of conquering and making slaves as a result of a war could be sensed from Paul's attitude toward the false brothers. Paul's malicious attitude against the false brothers could be connected to that of his "cursing" words (1: 8, 9) against his opponents.

The false brothers could be the faction in the Jerusalem church that was responsible for sending the delegation to the Galatian churches.<sup>61</sup> Paul does not provide much information about this faction but choose to describe them as who were "slipping in to spy on the freedom." The purpose of their activity was "to enslave us." According to Paul, the main purpose of the false brother's acts were to enslave the Gentile believers.

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<sup>58</sup> The term, ψευδάδελφος also can be translated into "a false believer."

<sup>59</sup> Betz, *Galatians*, 88-89.

<sup>60</sup> See, Timothy George, *Galatians* (NAC 30; Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 147-50; Hays, *Galatians*, 224-25.

<sup>61</sup> Martyn believes some relationship between the false brothers and Paul's opponents in Galatia "seems highly possible." Martyn, *Galatians*, 218.

The opponents in Galatia also slipped in the Galatian churches and promoted “slavery” among the Gentile believers. Longenecker points out, “In Paul’s view, their interests simply promoted slavery, in contrast to the freedom that is in Christ Jesus.”<sup>62</sup> Paul’s intensive use of “slavery” language and identification of the current Jerusalem with the slave woman, Hagar, shows that the opponents who attempted to enslave the Galatian believers were possibly connected to the faction in the Jerusalem church.

Can Paul’s critique of the current Jerusalem be purely focused on the faction that was responsible for sending the delegation to Galatia? Not likely. Paul’s accusation against the current Jerusalem could be seen as an assault on the leaders of the Jerusalem church, particularly James, who might have condoned, or possibly approved the group’s deploying “watchdogs” to the Galatian churches. In Paul’s description of the so-called “Antioch incident,” he mentions “men from James” (τινας ἀπὸ Ἰακώβου, 2:12) whose arrival caused vicious conflict between Paul and Cephas, Paul’s separation from Barnabas, and as a result, his departure from the Antioch church. Even though James was not the one who directly sent the delegation to the Galatian churches in order to put them under his control, he must have allowed the faction’s actions, because through their activities the Jerusalem church could maintain the central and superior position among the early churches by putting them under its supervision. Paul regards the whole leadership of the Jerusalem church as responsible for bringing slavery among the Gentile believers.

By connecting the current Jerusalem with Hagar’s bearing children of slavery, Paul may have believed that the Jerusalem church was enslaved under the imperial power

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<sup>62</sup> Longenecker, *The Triumph*, 26.

of the Roman Empire by imitating the oppressive system of the Empire. The Jerusalem church was under the mimetic power of the Empire. Just as the Roman Emperor sent numerous retainers all over the colonies in order to control the behavior of the subjugated people and to enforce the Roman regulations such as tax-laws in the colonies, so the influential people in Jerusalem sent a delegation as “watchdogs” to newly planted and developed “baby” churches in Asia Minor to govern the believers’ conducts and to demanded them to follow their guidance. While the Jerusalem church was suffering under the imperial power of the Roman Empire, it was doing similar things in mimicry of the worldly power. In this perspective, the Jerusalem authority functioned as a tool of the oppressive Roman imperial power over the new believing communities in Asia Minor and other areas.

### C. New Jerusalem and New Identity

Paul’s disappointment regarding the current Jerusalem and its mimicry of the oppressive Roman Empire leads him to introduce God’s eschatological new city, the Jerusalem above. Paul’s conviction about God’s *καινή κτίσις* in the midst of the oppressive imperial circumstances allows him to see God’s replacement of the old city with the new. In 4:26, Paul announces an eschatological new city: the Jerusalem above. This announcement should be understood as Paul’s decisive critique of the present Jerusalem. He also refers to this new city as the mother of all believers. He declares, “the Jerusalem above is free, and she is our mother.” He emphasizes “freedom” as a characteristic of this new city. As he uses the dichotomy between “enslaved” and “free” in 2:4, Paul parallels the two different Jerusalem: the present Jerusalem in the land of

Palestine associated with slavery – since it has been enslaved under the Roman Empire – versus the heavenly Jerusalem that is free. Just as John, in the book of Revelation, presents the New Jerusalem as an alternative city to Babylon, the oppressive city of the Roman Empire,<sup>63</sup> so Paul proposes the Jerusalem above as an eschatological alternative city to the present Jerusalem. In the process of replacing the old world with *καινή κτίσις*, God is substituting the Jerusalem above for the current Jerusalem.

By presenting the alternative city, the Jerusalem above, Paul is declaring the end of the role that the present Jerusalem had, as the symbolic center of the Christian movement and mother of all believers. That is the reason Paul emphasizes, “*our* mother is the Jerusalem above, who is *free*.” Paul uses the plural form “us” not only to emphasize the oneness of the Galatians and himself but also to stress that this Jerusalem above is the new mother for all believers. Paul’s declaration about the Jerusalem above is his ultimate critique of the Jerusalem church that was trying to “imitate” (to mimic) the Roman imperial system instead of Christ.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> John’s intensive critique of Babylon and his presentation of New Jerusalem are shown in Revelation 17, 18, and 21. New Jerusalem, as a city and a female image, is implicitly paralleled and contrasted to Babylon. By this parallel and contrast, John is critiquing Babylon, the great city of the Roman Empire. Through the book of Revelation a prophetic critique of the exploitative system of the Roman imperial power, John is declaring the replacement of the great city, Babylon, by the holy city, “new Jerusalem.” John understands that after destroying Babylon, God is constructing the true city, “new Jerusalem.” In this respect, “new Jerusalem” is God’s alternative city to Babylon and the ideal city for all people.

<sup>64</sup> The theme of “being imitators” has been an important theological and pastoral issue for Paul. In his “authentic” letters, Paul often uses the noun, *μιμητής/συμμιμητής* and verb, *γίνομαι* together to ask the audiences to “be imitators” (*μιμηταί μου γίνεσθε*, 1 Cor 4:16; 11:1; *μιμηταί ἡμῶν ἐγενήθητε καὶ τοῦ κυρίου* 1 Thes 1:6; *συμμιμηταί μου γίνεσθε*, Phi 3:17, *γίνεσθε ὡς ἐγώ*, Gal 4:12). Those “being imitators” expressions show several characteristics. First, the verb, *γίνομαι* was used as an imperative form, *γίνεσθε* (1 Cor 4:16; 11:1; Phi 3:17; Gal 4:12) or as an aorist passive form, *ἐγενήθητε* (1 Thes 1:6). It should be noted that even though Gal 4:12 does not contain the noun, *μιμητής*, it could be regarded as an “imitating” language, because Paul urges the Galatians to “imitate” as he is. The imperative *γίνεσθε* provides enough support to interpret this phrase as a part of the “imitating” passages. Second, the object of the verb, *γίνομαι* is Paul himself (1 Cor 4:16; 11:1; Gal 4:12), or “us” and the Lord (1 Thess 1:6). Here the expression, “us” should be comprehended as to refer to him and his mission team. Third, Paul requests the audiences to be imitators of him because he is imitating Christ (1 Cor. 11:1, *μιμηταί μου γίνεσθε, καθὼς καὶ γὰρ Χριστοῦ*).

Paul's attack on the current Jerusalem by introducing an alternative city as the mother of all believers provides him an opportunity to present a new identity for the Galatian believers. Paul cites Isaiah 54:1 in 4:27 in order to make his argument more effective for a new identity for the Galatians. In Isaiah 54:1 a barren woman is believed not only to point to Sarah, Abraham's wife who was barren, but also to refer to the city, Jerusalem in its exilic desolation. According to Mary Callaway's investigation, Isaiah uses the mother image of Jerusalem for a new identity of the people of Israel who became desolate through the exile.<sup>65</sup> Paul picks up the idea of "mother Jerusalem," and the image used by Isaiah for a new communal identity for the Israelite who survived the exile. Then, he uses the mother image to give a new identity for the new believers in Galatia.

Paul must have known the fact that the barren woman, metaphorically the desolate Jerusalem, became the mother of countless children by the miraculous power of God in Isaiah 66. According to Isaiah, God's power of creating "the new heaven and the new earth" enables the desperate Jerusalem to be the place of joy and pleasure (65:18-19) and the mother of many children (66:7-24). Isaiah is arguing that the promise given to the barren woman--"the children of the desolate woman will be more than the children of her

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For more details, see Elizabeth Castelli, *Imitating Paul: A Discourse of Power* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster/John Know Press, 1991).

<sup>65</sup> Mary Callaway argues that Isaiah fully develops the individual image of the barren woman into the collective people. According to her, Isaiah reinterprets traditional material in order to speak in a new situation, especially through reinterpreting Sarah the mother of Isaac as the mother of Israel. She argues that Isaiah makes several changes in the story of Sarah: 1) Isaiah shifts the narrative form into a poem in which the third person form had been switched into second person; 2) Isaiah alters the story that talks about the past into a story of foretelling the future of Israel; 3) Isaiah transforms the birth narrative of Israel's hero into the oracle for the community of Israel. Through those changes, Isaiah attempts to give a common identity to the exiled Israel through the mother image of Jerusalem. Mary C. Callaway, *Sing, O Barren One: A Study in Comparative Midrash* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986), 59-81.



that is married” (Isaiah 54:1b)--is eschatologically being fulfilled through God’s creating “the new heaven and the new earth.”

Paul associates his idea that “Jerusalem above is our mother” with the image of the barren woman (the desolate Jerusalem) who later became the mother of countless children. In Paul’s understanding, God’s same miraculous power is present with the new believers in Galatia and it changes their identity from deserted Gentiles to children of Abraham and children of the promise. Paul understands that the Jerusalem above as God’s eschatological reality is present with the Galatian believers and it has an immediate impact as they find their new identity. His assurance of the presence of the Jerusalem above among the Gentile believers is shown in his use of the present tense verb, ἐστίν in 4:26. Through this verb Paul is emphasizing the current invasion of God’s eschatological reign into the present realm and the everyday lives of the Galatian believers. On this point, Susan Eastman’s explanation is most helpful: “by telling the Galatians that they belong to ‘Jerusalem above,’ Paul emphasizes the incursion of future apocalyptic events into the present time.”<sup>66</sup> In God’s eschatological reign, God’s promise to Abraham and Sarah that they will have countless children is being fulfilled by the Gentile believers who found a new identity in the Jerusalem above, the identity as true heirs of Abraham.

As a result, Paul declares in 4:28 that “now you [Galatians] are like Isaac, children of promise.” Paul claims that the Gentile believers now became the children of Abraham’s promise not by circumcision or by observing the Jewish calendar but by

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<sup>66</sup> Susan Eastman, *Recovering Paul’s Mother Tongue: Language and Theology in Galatians* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 2007), 159.

God's grace in Christ.<sup>67</sup> By identifying the Galatian believers as the children of the promise, Paul turns the opponents' teachings upside down —according to whom those who are circumcised would be the true heirs of Abraham, the children of promise.

In 4:30, Paul demands from the Galatians to “drive out the slave and her child.” Paul urges the Gentile believers to cast away the opponents supported by the faction in Jerusalem out of the Galatian churches. This negative attitude toward the opponents is reflected in his “cursing language” (1:8, 9). His demand also implies that Paul's reinterpretation of the story of Abraham's two sons is a foundation for his criticism against the current Jerusalem authority's imperialistic attempt to control the new churches in Asia Minor.

In a broader perspective, the ultimate objective of Paul's critique may not be the current Jerusalem but the evil current world order, which is symbolized by the oppressive systems of the Roman Empire. As mentioned earlier, Paul hints that “the present evil age” could be the repressive systems of the Roman Empire. Paul's assurance of God's new world enables him to criticize the current Jerusalem, which is imitating and even promoting the repressive operating structure of the Empire.

## Conclusion

With the helpful insights of various scholars, I have attempted to reconstruct the main features of the power dynamics which governs the interactions of Paul, the Jerusalem church, and the Galatian churches. Paul's opponents were Jewish Christ-

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<sup>67</sup> Ukwuegbu correctly points out that the cross serves as a symbol of the eschatological new identity for those who are “in Christ.” Bernard O. Ukwuegbu, *The Emergence of Christian Identity in Paul's Letter to the Galatians* (Bonn: Borengässer, 2003), 387-93.

believers from Jerusalem. The nomistic faction in the Jerusalem church supported their activities and they seemed to have called Jerusalem, “our mother.” Just as a group of people from James arrived at Antioch to control the behaviors of Jewish believers including Cephas, so the opponents came to Galatia to preach a “different gospel.” Their message emphasizing circumcision and observance of the Law in order to be true heirs of Abraham was persuasive enough to get many followers in Galatia. Paul, however, regards them as an extension of the colonial power of the Jerusalem church authority over the “baby” churches in Asia Minor. Like Roman soldiers in the land of Palestine who exercised imperial power in the name of the Roman Emperor, Paul’s opponents, in Paul’s judgment, attempted to control the Galatian believers by appealing to the authority of Jerusalem. Through his reinterpretation of the story of Abraham’s two sons and presentation of a new identity for the Galatians, Paul is criticizing the present Jerusalem church authority and its imperialistic attempt to take control of the Galatian believing communities.

Paul, by presenting Jerusalem above as an alternative city to the present Jerusalem, asserts that the function of the current Jerusalem church as the symbolic center of the whole believing communities is ending and is being replaced by God’s eschatological new city, the Jerusalem above. In Paul’s opinion, God’s *καινή κτίσις* symbolized by the Jerusalem above should have an immediate effect on the Galatians’ identity and everyday lives. Paul is sure that God’s eschatological reign has already begun to change the imperial system that the current Jerusalem attempted to establish by mimicry of the Roman Empire.

These interpretive choices (among other possibilities offered by other scholars) are, of course, related to my perception of the features of the Galatian communities which would best address the needs of the Korean immigrant Christians. From the perspective and experience of Korean immigrants described in earlier chapters, the power dynamics around Paul, the Jerusalem church, and the Galatian churches provide various insights for the lives of Korean believers living in the United States.

First, the Los Angeles riots have shown clearly that Korean immigrants are living in a large interwoven network of power dynamics in American society. For them establishing God's new world often means getting involved in these dynamics. If power dynamics are unavoidable reality of our daily lives, our efforts to embody God's *καινή κτίσις* in the midst of various forms of imperial powers always carry a risk of being vulnerable to various conflicts. Just as Paul engaged in battle with the oppressive attitudes of Jerusalem and eventually with the evil nature of the current world order, which enslaves all created things, Korean immigrants must fight against different forms of oppressive powers, such as racism, discrimination, and rejection from the dominant group. At the time of the Los Angeles riots, Korean immigrants had become easy targets and vulnerable victims of the repressive social structure and unjust powers expressed through extreme violence, ignorance, and scapegoating.

Second, power dynamics often consist of an attempt to control by one entry and resistance from another. Present Jerusalem's effort to control the newly developed Galatian churches in Asia Minor by sending a delegation was challenged by Paul's strong opposition. Jerusalem's imperial endeavor to put the Galatian churches under its domination confronted Paul's ardent defiance. Influential people in the Jerusalem church

might have believed in the hierarchical relationship between the Jerusalem church and new believing communities in Asia Minor. From the perspective of Roman patronage,<sup>68</sup> it was natural to have a superior and inferior relationship among people and social organizations and for the inferior body to be subjected to the superior. In the American society, the dominant white group often tries to keep ethnic minority groups under their hegemony and to maintain an “American racial caste system.”<sup>69</sup> In order to achieve this ethnic hierarchy, the dominant group often promotes ethnic stereotypes and misunderstanding among the minority groups through mass media. The dominant group even stimulates tensions and conflicts among minority groups. Korean immigrants who learned about racism and white supremacy and the destructive power of those repressive systems as a result of their experience from the riots not only began to intensify the ethnic solidarity among Korean Americans but also began to pay close attention to the dialogue and mutual understanding with other ethnic groups. Ethnic solidarity and cooperation with other ethnic groups should be understood as firm actions of resistance against the subtle domination of the dominant group over them.

As described in previous chapters, the Korean immigrant church, at the same time, must become more self-aware the oppressive and hierarchical male-centered structure within the church resulted in the exclusion of female members from leadership positions. The immigrant church therefore should resist male-dominance in order to be a truer manifestation of God’s new social order.

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<sup>68</sup> Detailed explanation about patronage will be provided in the following chapter.

<sup>69</sup> Cornel West, *Race Matters* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), 105.

Third, conflict often can become a chance for a new identity. Fighting against the opponents and the imperial authority behind them in Jerusalem provided Paul an opportunity to present more clearly to the Galatians their new identity. Through his reinterpretation of the story of Abraham's two sons, Paul offers the Gentile believers a new identity as true heirs of Abraham and as children of promise. He proposes the Jerusalem above as their new mother and identifies them as her children. He emphasizes the new status that the Gentile believers have in God's new world through Christ.

Similarly the riots provided the opportunity for younger-generation Korean Americans to realize their Koreaness that they could not fully appreciate before. For many 1.5-and second-generation Korean Americans, the riots became an opportunity to ponder their connectedness with their parents, the first-generation Korean Americans, who became helpless victims of enormous and sudden violence. They began to share the pain from which their parents had suffered most and to participate in the fight against the oppressive powers not only for the benefits of the Korean immigrant community but also for more just and livable conditions for all those who were living on American soil. By sharing pains together and participating in correcting unjust social structures, they became more aware of their own identity.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### NEW CREATION AND GOD'S NEW ECONOMY

In the previous chapters, I have tried to understand which, among the several majority and minority scholarly interpretations of the meaning and function of the new creation, would be most helpful for Korean immigrant churches in the United States. Similarly I have attempted to figure out the most fruitful view of the power dynamics between Paul and Jerusalem expressed in his arguments against the opponents in the Galatian churches. In this chapter, I propose to explore how Paul endeavored to create a new economic system through his churches as a part of his effort to establish God's new creation in the midst of the Empire by organizing a collection for the poor saints of Jerusalem.

Even though the economic condition of Paul is a disputed issue among scholars,<sup>1</sup> it seems relatively clear that Paul was deeply involved in economic activity in the Roman Empire. The marketplace, a usual center for a local economy, often was a work place for Paul whose occupation was tent-making.<sup>2</sup> Through this involvement, Paul must have been well aware of the exploitative economic system of the Empire that often enslaved the people who engaged in it.

By having his own trade, he could have had an opportunity to meet a small number of people who stopped by his shop for leather products and he could then have

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<sup>1</sup> The economic condition of Paul will be discussed later.

<sup>2</sup> According to Acts 18:3, at Corinth Paul met a Jewish couple, Aquila and Priscilla, who were expelled from Rome by Claudius' order. Paul began to work with them because they had the same job, tent-making.

the chance to share the gospel with them. “Cutting and sewing leather,” as E. P. Sanders explains, “would not have interfered with discussion. We cannot know for sure just how Paul reached interested hearers, and he may have employed diverse means. He was probably most effective, however, one-to-one, or in small groups.”<sup>3</sup> The spot in a market corner that Paul set up a shop could have been the place where he met and attracted listeners and talked about the Gospel with them. Having his business at the heart of everyday economy, the marketplace, must have helped Paul learn about and experience the reality of the Imperial economic system.

Out of his own experience with the exploitative economic system of the Empire, Paul wanted to establish a new economic order that could be suitable for God’s new world. He initiated his own economic movement among the young communities of believers, which he established in the Mediterranean basin. That was the Jerusalem collection. It seems that Paul began this project as his own response to the request of the leaders of the Jerusalem church at the meeting held in Jerusalem to “remember the poor” (Gal 2:10). Paul inaugurated the collection project in order to help the poor saints in the Jerusalem church. It turned out, however, to be an opportunity for Paul to introduce God’s new economic system that was opposed to the current economic structure of the Empire, particularly expressed in the patronage system.<sup>4</sup> The collection became a central project that he was eager to complete throughout his ministry. He not only spent his own time and effort for this collection project, but also was even willing to risk his own life to deliver it to Jerusalem (Rom 15:31). It is therefore important to see the socio-economic

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<sup>3</sup> E. P. Sanders, *Paul* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 20.

<sup>4</sup> Detailed explanation of the patronage system will be provided later.



and geo-political implications of the collection and the situations of Korean immigrants in America in order to understand Paul's vision for God's new creation.

## 1. Scholarly Readings of the Jerusalem Collection

As was the case with other issues, scholars' interpretations of the Jerusalem collection vary because they have distinctive perspectives, which have led them to emphasize one aspect of the collection while ignoring others. Some commentators propose two or three different options at the same time because of the complexity of the collection, while others suggest a list of possible interpretations like an acrobat who juggles many balls in the air instead of highlighting one over the other. These scholarly debates on the meaning and function of Paul's collection and its actual process can be divided into different groups. Let's review the distinctive approaches to Paul's collection project for the poor saints in Jerusalem so as to discern which proposed interpretation would be most helpful for Korean immigrant believers.

### A. Eschatological/Theological Reading

Certain scholars propose to see the Jerusalem collection from the perspective of the Old Testament/Jewish tradition. They believe that Paul and the delegates from his Gentile congregations should be understood as an eschatological pilgrimage of the nations to the holy mountain of God, Zion. They pay particular attention to the delegates' coming to Jerusalem and connect it with the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies of all nations' end-time journey to Jerusalem with gifts. This pilgrimage of Gentiles, according to them, could have evoked the Jews' jealousy so that the Jews might accept

the Gospel. These scholars interpret Paul's collection from their reading of Romans 9-11 where Paul talks about the role of the Gentile believers for the salvation of the Jews. They often regard the collection as tangible fruit of Paul's successful mission among the Gentiles and the delegates' delivery of it to Jerusalem as its manifestation.

The eschatological reading of the Gentile mission is not new. Many Pauline scholars have understood Paul's mission among the Gentiles from the perspective of "eschatological pilgrimage expectations." According to this perspective, in the last days, the Gentiles would make a pilgrimage to Mount Zion, because the restoration of Israel and the glorification of Zion would cause the Gentiles to abandon their idols and instead worship the true God of Israel.<sup>5</sup> Thus these scholars interpret Paul's collection from the viewpoint of an eschatological pilgrimage. They however slightly twist the traditional expectation by putting the emphasis on the pilgrimage of the Gentile believers for the salvation of the Jews.

Johannes Munck approaches Paul's mission among the Gentiles, especially his collection project, from the eschatological and theological point of view. Munck explains that there are two important circumstances for Paul's visit to Jerusalem to deliver the collection: 1) despite the serious risk of his life, Paul personally went up to Jerusalem; and 2) Paul was accompanied by a large group of Gentile believers who were representatives of contributing communities. According to Munck, through Paul's personal visit with the delegates, he intended to save the Jews by evoking their jealousy of the Gentiles who already accepted the Gospel. At the same time, the large number of emissaries from Gentile believing communities with gifts demonstrate the fulfillment of

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<sup>5</sup> For detailed explanation, See Terence L. Donaldson, *Paul and the Gentiles: Remapping the Apostle's Convictional World* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997), 69-74 and 187-197.

the Hebrew Bible prophecies such as Isaiah 2:2-3; 60:5; Micah 4:1-2 where the prophets say that in the last days, the nations will come to the holy city with gifts.<sup>6</sup>

Keith F. Nickle also tries to read Paul's collection from the perspective of Old Testament eschatology.<sup>7</sup> He wants to connect the collection with Paul's strategy for "converting Israel." He believes that the delegates from the Gentile congregations would provoke the jealousy among the unbelieving Jews and, as a result, they might accept the Gospel. 2 Cor 9:10 is an essential verse for Nickle's argument because in his understanding, this verse contains two quotations from Isaiah 55:10 and Hosea 10:12 where the idea of the Gentiles' participation in God's redemption is implied. "The combination of the two quotations in II Cor. 9.10 exactly corresponded," as Nickle argues, "to Paul's conviction that the effectiveness of the Word of God among the Gentiles was of instrumental significance for the conversion of Israel."<sup>8</sup>

Regarding the role of the delegates, Nickle connects them with the eschatological expectation of all nations' pilgrimage to Zion. He however emphasizes a more active role of the Gentiles. According to him, the Gentile believers are not just "seekers" or "petitioners" of Israel but "the true Israel of God" who proclaims God's salvation. Paul's collection for the saints in Jerusalem and the Gentile delegates from the early believing

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<sup>6</sup> Johannes Munck, *Paul and the Salvation of Mankind* (trans. Frank Clarke; Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1959), 301-08.

<sup>7</sup> Nickle actually talks about three different points of importance that Paul's collection carries. He summarizes, "(1) an act of Christian charity among fellow believers motivated by the love of Christ; (2) an act expressing the solidarity of the Christian fellowship by presenting irrefutable evidence that God was calling the Gentiles to faith; (3) an eschatological pilgrimage of the Gentile Christians to Jerusalem by which the Jews were to be confronted with the undeniable reality of the divine gift of saving grace to the Gentiles and thereby be themselves moved through jealousy to finally accept the gospel." Keith F. Nickle, *The Collection: A Study in Paul's Strategy* (SBT 48; Naperville, Ill.: Alec R. Allenson, 1966), 142.

<sup>8</sup> Nickle, *The Collection*, 137.

communities play an important role in God's "salvation history," "Heilsgeschichte," for the Jews by stimulating their jealousy of the Gentile believers.

Dieter Georgi also emphasizes the eschatological aspect of the Gentile mission by connecting Paul's collection with the salvation of the Jews. According to him, "the provocative nature of the collection" is that "the salvation of the Gentiles had become the prerequisite for the salvation of the Jews."<sup>9</sup> Georgi believes that the Gentiles' conversion to Christ, which results from Paul's successful mission among them, could irritate the Jews who remain secured in their traditional belief of salvation. That irritation, as a result, can bring the Jews to the grace of God in Christ. As other scholars who approach Paul's collection from a theological perspective, Georgi associates Paul's delivery of the collection to Jerusalem depicted in Romans 15 with Paul's discussion of the redemption of the Jews in Romans 9-11. For Georgi the collection is the culmination of the eschatological Gentile mission; a large group of uncircumcised Gentile believers conveying the collection to Jerusalem would "revive in Jewish eyes the old concept of the eschatological pilgrimage of the peoples."<sup>10</sup> However, such a pilgrimage is different from what is found in the prophecies of the Hebrew Bible, especially concerning the gifts the Gentile delegates are bringing; they are not for building the Temple and for privileged people, but for the poor saints in Jerusalem.

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<sup>9</sup> Dieter Georgi, *Remembering the Poor: The History of Paul's Collection for Jerusalem* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992), 118.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 119.

## Summary and Evaluation

The scholars who adopt this eschatological and theological reading of Paul's collection attempt to interweave three different types of texts: 1) the Old Testament prophets' sayings on the nations' pilgrimage to Jerusalem; 2) Paul's theological reflection on the salvation of the Jews through their jealousy over the Gentile believers; and 3) the texts concerning the Gentile delegates' delivery of the collection to Jerusalem. This reading has strength in that it emphasizes the eschatological character of Paul's mission among the Gentiles. Paul's ministry for the Gentiles is about God's eschatological rule of the nations and the collection for the saints in Jerusalem is the visual result of that rule. This reading also has the benefit of utilizing the eschatological pilgrimage expectation in the Jewish traditions. However it twists the conventional expectation by using Paul's arguments in Romans 9-11 where he emphasizes the positive role of the Gentiles who evoke the jealousy of the Jews, which leads them to the salvation of God in Christ.

However, this perspective shows several limitations. First, Paul does not directly mention any of the key Old Testament texts that contain the pilgrimage of the nations in the last days in his "collection passages" such as Gal 2:10, 1 Cor 16:1-4, 2 Cor 8-9, and Rom 15:25-31. Second, this perspective limits itself by connecting the collection only with the salvation of the Jews that Paul mentions in Romans 9-11. The collection's meaning and function in a broader society has been ignored by its narrow focus on the redemption of the Jews. Consequently such an interpretation has limited benefits for the Korean immigrant churches.

## B. Ecumenical Reading

Some scholars want to read Paul's collection by focusing on the ecumenical role that the collection is playing among the early believing communities, especially between Jewish and Gentile churches.<sup>11</sup> They often pay attention to the word, *κοινωνία*, appearing in the passages where Paul talks about the collection (2 Cor 8:4, 23; 9:3, 13; Rom 15:26; Gal 2:9) and argue that the word should be translated as "fellowship." They also emphasize the collection as a "voluntary" participation. According to them, Paul's collection for the saints in Jerusalem is the expression of the unity and fellowship of the early churches, particularly between the Jewish and Gentile believing communities through the voluntary offering of the Gentile believers.

Oscar Cullmann, for example, explains that the collection is "much more than a humanitarian collection. It is an ecumenical affair."<sup>12</sup> The purpose of the collection, as Cullmann argues, is "to display the bond of unity between Gentile Christians and Jewish Christians."<sup>13</sup> Cullmann even attempts to compare Paul's collection with the Jewish temple contribution, the Temple tax, which was collected to support the public worship, because he finds a similarity between them: creating and keeping a unity among the members. The obligatory temple tax, according to him, is replaced by a voluntary

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<sup>11</sup> Crossan and Reed regard the collection as "the great symbolic act of unity between Christian Judaism and Christian paganism." John Dominic Crossan and Jonathan L. Reed, *In Search of Paul: How Jesus's Apostle Opposed Rome's Empire with God's Kingdom, A New Vision of Paul's Words and World* (New York: HarperCollins, 2004), 398. Many scholars believe that the collection is for the unity of the early churches. See C. E. B. Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans* vol. II (ICC; Edinburgh; T & T Clark, 1979), 770. N. T. Wright, *The Letter to the Romans* (NIB vol. X; Nashville, Abingdon Press, 2002), 756. George T. Montague, *First Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2011), 288-91. Craig Blomberg, *I Corinthians* (The NIV Application Commentary; Grand Rapids, Michigan: ZondervanPublishingHouse, 1995), 323.

<sup>12</sup> Oscar Cullmann, "The Early Church and the Ecumenical Problem," *Anglican Theological Review* Vol. XL (1958): 296.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 297.

offering: “A free-will offering for the poor as a manifestation of the unity of the Church takes the place of the temple tax.”<sup>14</sup> Cullmann’s emphasis on the ecumenical and voluntary characteristics of the collection and explanation of the intention of Paul for the collection project, church unity, has been accepted by many commentators. However, they are not simply duplicating Cullmann’s idea but often adding their own ingredients to it.

Keith F. Nickle who emphasizes the eschatological aspect of the collection does not overlook the ecumenical implication of it. He argues that “the body of Christ” is the central theological concept that Paul had in mind during the process of the collection project and that the unity of the church as “the eschatological assembly of God in Christ” is the most permeated idea that Paul maintained in his missionary work. Nickle shows that the unity of the early churches through the collection has two connotations. One is that it is a voluntary reciprocal sharing of love. When the Jerusalem church takes an initiative in sharing the gospel, the Gentile believers make financial support for them in return. The other is that the collection functions as a testimony to the genuine inclusion of the Gentile believers in the body of Christ. The believers in the Jerusalem church will be brought to the understanding that the Gentiles are now fully participating in God’s salvation history as a part of one body of Christ.<sup>15</sup>

Margaret E. Thrall also utilizes Cullmann’s interpretation and, as a result, regards the collection as “a means to church unity.”<sup>16</sup> Thrall however adds to Cullmann’s original

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 298.

<sup>15</sup> Nickle, *The Collection*, 118-29.

<sup>16</sup> Margaret E. Thrall, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, Vol. II (A Critical and Exegetical Commentary; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2000), 514.

view by inserting her own consideration of the uneasy relationship between Paul and the leaders of the Jerusalem church. She believes that Paul has a particular strategy in his collection for the poor saints in Jerusalem:

It remains possible, nevertheless, that Paul did recognize the desirability of establishing a formal relationship with Jerusalem of some kind, and that in that sense the Jerusalem-Antioch bond may have served as a precedent. The Antioch incident had given warning that representatives of the Jerusalem church were prepared to travel elsewhere to exert their influence on church practice. And if that had happened even after the conclusion of an agreement, it would be even more likely to happen in areas where no such agreement was in place. If this was Paul's thinking, it would account for the comparatively large number of gentile delegates, who would be able to assure their churches of the terms of association with Jerusalem, should itinerant members of that church attempt to cause trouble.<sup>17</sup>

Thrall thinks that the collection is a charitable activity of the Gentile churches for the poor members of the Jerusalem church and hence it promotes the unity between the Jewish and Gentile churches. However, she argues that building a satisfactory relationship with the Jerusalem church is Paul's careful tactic to protect his own churches from the authoritative leaders of the church who want to exercise their influence on the Gentile churches.

### Summary and Evaluation

Overall, the ecumenical readings of the collection emphasize that the Gentile believers' monetary collection for the poor saints in Jerusalem is an apparent manifestation of the solidarity between the Jewish and Gentiles churches. It shows the strong bond of unity among the early churches that together are constituting the body of Christ. Furthermore, as David J. Downs points out, it also may have "served to strengthen

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 515.



ties between the separate Gentile churches of the Pauline mission spread across the cities of the Eastern Mediterranean.”<sup>18</sup>

By participating in this ecumenical project, individual Gentile churches may have found solidarity with the believing communities in different areas. This ecumenical reading nicely elucidates the positive function of the collection, intensifying the unity and fellowship among the early churches by emphasizing the voluntary character of the collection. Many scholars find this reading reasonable and support it.

However, this position is somewhat naïve in that it ignores the power dynamics and political tensions among the early churches, especially between their leaders. For the purpose of our current study, this position can hardly explain the polemical hues described in Galatians. In Galatians, Paul not only keeps a distance from the leaders of the Jerusalem church, but also critiques, as fully described earlier, the present Jerusalem by identifying it with a slave woman (Gal 4:25). From this perspective, Thrall’s articulation of Paul’s strategy implied in his collection makes more sense. Interpreters need to sense the political nuance that Paul’s collection carries.

### C. Political Reading

Some commentators are interested in exploring a political aspect of the collection. They believe that Paul’s concrete action of collecting money from his own churches and his journey to Jerusalem with the Gentile representatives in order to deliver it can be

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<sup>18</sup> David J. Downs, *The Offering of the Gentiles: Paul’s Collection for Jerusalem in Its Chronological, Cultural, and Cultic Contexts* (Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 18.

understood as a political action,<sup>19</sup> through which a certain power dynamics are clearly shown.

Sze-kar Wan attempts to present Paul's collection as an "anticolonial act." He thinks that the collection for the poor saints in Jerusalem has been the central project of Paul's missionary work among the Gentiles. Although he acknowledges the positive feature of the ecumenical reading in that the collection promotes the unity between the Jewish and Gentiles churches, Wan critiques it because, in his opinion, this approach "does not go far enough." He raises an additional question to introduce his own interpretation: "Why was the unity between gentile and Jewish congregations so important to Paul that he was willing to risk his life to accomplish it?"<sup>20</sup> According to Wan, Paul's collection has much broader ethno-political implications. In fact, it functions as a critique against Jewish ethnocentrism. Paul "severely criticized those who would close the door on Gentiles or insist that Gentiles adapt to Jewish norms before they would be included. Through his effort to bring the collection to a completion, Paul issued a statement against Jewish ethnic exclusiveness." In this view, Paul's collection is a subversive act and at its heart, it is "an anti-imperial and anti-hegemonic protest."<sup>21</sup> Wan asserts that the collection is Paul's symbolic act of attacking Jewish ethnic exclusivism and the hierarchical social structure that Roman patronage formulates.

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<sup>19</sup> Taylor admits that Paul's collection has "wider social and political implications." Nicholas Taylor, *Paul, Antioch and Jerusalem: A Study in Relationships and Authority in Earliest Christianity* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992), 214.

<sup>20</sup> Sze-kar Wan, "COLLECTION FOR THE SAINTS AS ANTICOLONIAL ACT: Implication of Paul's Ethnic Reconstruction," in *Paul and Politics: EKKLESIA, ISRAEL, IMPERIUM, INTERPRETATION* (ed. Richard Horsley; Harrisburg, Penn.: Trinity Press International, 2000), 196.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

Wan emphasizes that Paul pursues the collection project as “an ethnic Jew” and that he aims to expand the Jewish group boundaries, which have often been defined by circumcision and dietary laws, through including Gentile believers. Paul’s collection and his visit to Jerusalem with the Gentile delegates embody the vision of Jewish universalism prophesized in the Hebrew Bible, in which Zion would be the center of the new world. In his reading of Romans 15, Wan adopts the eschatological perspective and argues that Gentile believers’ arrival in Jerusalem indicates the eschatological fulfillment of the Jewish universal new world and the money the Gentile representatives carry is an “offering” to God. For Wan, by presenting this vision of a universal new world, Paul is critiquing the narrow ethnocentrism of Judaism. This inclusion of the Gentiles in the last days also has another role: “This Jewish universalism would serve as a form of resistance as well: the world-governing scope of the colonizers is thoroughly relativized and crippled by this eschatological fulfillment.”<sup>22</sup> The emergence of new world order could be understood as an attack on the present world power, the Roman Empire.

Wan also emphasizes the issue of equality that Paul describes in 2 Corinthians 8-9. Paul is trying to “lower the patronal value” of the Corinthian’s monetary contribution for the poor in Jerusalem by describing God as the ultimate supplier. “Paul reiterates the assertion that all generosity and all wealth ultimately come from God, and that the final aim and goal of the collection is likewise the glorification and thanksgiving to God.”<sup>23</sup> By placing the financial contributors like the Corinthian believers on an equal footing as the receivers, the poor saints in Jerusalem, as Wan argues, Paul criticizes the vertical patronal

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 207.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 210-14.

structure in which superior patrons should be placed much higher than inferior clients in the hierarchical social ladder. From this point of view, the collection is an “anticolonial act.”

Wan’s arguments are insightful regarding the collection as a subversive political action against Jewish ethnocentrism and Roman imperial system of patronage. However, Wan’s emphasis on “the Jewishness of Paul” and “Jewish universalism” leads him to go so far as to hint to a subordinate position of the Gentiles. “He [Paul] also makes it quite clear to his readers that it is an essentially Jewish vision in which the Gentiles participate and that it is a Jewish institution (the temple?) into which Gentiles have been incorporated.” Even though Wan is aware of the slippery slope of subordinating Gentiles to the Jews, he argues, “through the collection, he asserts his Jewish identity and at least hints at gentile subordination in the economic structure of the new group.”<sup>24</sup> Wan’s emphasis on the Jewishness of Paul and his adoption of the eschatological perspective, which is basically Jewish-centered, in his reading of Roman 15 blunts his sharp insight of the collection’s anticolonial function against the imperial economic system.

Richard Horsley attempts to understand Paul’s Gentile believing community, the *ekklēsia*, as an alternative society of the Roman Empire.<sup>25</sup> He also explains the anti-imperial character of Paul’s collection for the poor in Jerusalem. According to him, the collection “indicate[s] that the network of assemblies had an ‘international’ political-economic dimension diametrically opposed to the tributary political economy of the empire...the local assemblies shared economic resources across the ‘nations’ and across

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 209.

<sup>25</sup> The idea that Paul has vigorously attempted to establish the *ekklēsia* as an alternative society against the Roman Empire in God’s new world will be fully described later.

considerable distances.”<sup>26</sup> In his opinion, that kind of international economic movement was unique in the Roman Empire.<sup>27</sup> The useful insight of Horsley’s argument is that Paul’s collection established the network of small Gentile churches, which grew to become an “international economic movement” against the exploitative economic structure of the Empire.

Efraín Agosto is another scholar who perceives the political facet of the collection. According to Agosto’s explanation, in the economic system of the Empire, money usually flows “from bottom to top and from the margins (conquered territories) to the center (Rome) by means of extreme and extensive taxation.” However, in Paul’s mission, the stream of the financial resources has been changed: “In Paul’s churches, resources traveled to where they were needed to carry out the gospel mission and to ‘remember the poor’ (Gal 2.10). Thus, by means of this ‘underground economy,’ Paul once again challenged business as usual in the Roman Empire.”<sup>28</sup> Agosto designates the new economic system in Paul’s missionary network as the “underground economy.” Even though Paul’s underground economy is a small movement among his urban congregations, Agosto argues that Paul utilizes it against the imperial economy.

## Summary and Evaluation

This political reading of the collection pays a close attention to the power

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<sup>26</sup> Richard A. Horsley, “1 Corinthians: A Case Study of Paul’s Assembly as an Alternative Society,” in *Paul and Empire: Religion and Power in Roman Imperial Society* (ed. Richard Horsley: Harrisburg, Pennsylvania; Trinity Press, 1997), 251.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> Efraín Agosto, “The Letter to the Philippians,” in *A Postcolonial Commentary on the New Testament Writings* (ed. Fernando Segovia and R. S. Sugirtharajah; London: T & T Clark, 2009), 289.

dynamics implied in Paul's concrete act of raising money and of delivering it to Jerusalem with the Gentiles believers. According to this perspective, Paul's collection functions as God's new economic system in which all participants are equal before God's grace. The collection also plays a role of attacking the patronal hierarchy of the broader society. This view correctly recognizes Paul's collection among his churches as a political movement that stands against the Imperial system of economy. This political reading leads us to realize the existence of power struggles in which Paul was involved in his mission among the Gentiles. Nevertheless, this reading overlooks the religious and ecclesiological implications that Paul's collection conveys.

#### D. Ritual/Religious Reading

Several scholars want to emphasize the central role of God's grace in Paul's collection project. According to them, the abundance of God's grace in Christ is the ultimate resource for the Gentile believers' generous donation for the poor in Jerusalem. James R. Harrison, for example, tries to see the Jerusalem collect as God's grace, *χάρις*, by focusing on 2 Cor 8-9 where Paul frequently uses the word, *χάρις*, in its various forms.<sup>29</sup> Harrison believes that God's abundant divine grace through the incarnation and crucifixion of Christ is the fundamental source for the believers' generosity toward others. The early church believers' experience of the abundance of God's grace in Christ enables them to be generous in supporting others in need. According to Harrison, the impoverished Macedonian churches' generous contributions for the poor in Jerusalem is

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<sup>29</sup> *χάρις* (8:16; 9:15); *χάριν* (8:1, 4, 6, 9; 9:8, 14); and *χάριτι* (8:7, 19).

an act of embodying “the sacrifice of Christ’s incarnational poverty.”<sup>30</sup> In Harrison’s understanding, the three words, “grace” (χάρις), “sharing” (or “fellowship” or “community,” κοινωνία), and “service” (διακονία) are central theological terms for Paul and essential in interpreting the collection: “For Paul, human beneficence is motivated by divine grace and seeks to establish fellowship with its recipients...through serving their needs.”<sup>31</sup> The original source for launching a fellowship among the churches by serving others in need is the abundance of God’s grace in Christ. In this perspective Paul’s Jerusalem collection is, in Harrison’s term, very “ecclesiological and christological.”<sup>32</sup>

According to Harrison’s explanation, Paul’s emphasis on the abundance of God’s grace and the voluntariness of the Gentile believers for the collection has two different functions. On the one hand, it plays a role of critiquing the reciprocity between patrons and clients in the patronal system of the Greco-Roman society, which establishes a hierarchical structure among those who are involved in it. “Paul’s language of grace subtly undermines,” as Harrison describes, “the social expectations aroused by the Greco-Roman reciprocity system.”<sup>33</sup> On the other hand, it not only extricates the Corinthian believers from “the tyranny of commensurability that characterized the reciprocity system,” but also liberates the Jerusalem church from the fear that “they would be obligated to return favour for the collection.”<sup>34</sup> Therefore the collection is a new way of

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<sup>30</sup> James R. Harrison, *Paul’s Language of Grace in its Graeco-Roman Context* (Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 297.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 299.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 313.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 323

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 323-24.

building an egalitarian social relationship among the believers that is totally different from the classified social ladder of the Greco-Roman world.

Through her reading of 2 Corinthians 8-9, Beverly Roberts Gaventa, another commentator who puts emphasis on God's grace, calls Paul's collection as "the economy of grace." She argues that Paul's collection for the believers in Jerusalem originates from God's grace: "the collection itself—on the face of it a human endeavor—has its origin and energy in God's grace."<sup>35</sup> According to Gaventa, there are three different types of grace: grace of God, grace of Jesus Christ, and the grace of believers. However, the emphasis should be placed on God's grace through Jesus Christ, because "believers give only as they have already received from the gracious actions of God and of Christ."<sup>36</sup> God's abundant grace manifested in Christ and bestowed upon believers flows from one believing community to another in destitute situation.

David J. Downs attempts to comprehend the Jerusalem collection metaphorically. Utilizing Lakoff and Johnson's insights on metaphors, Downs describe the collection as "an act of cultic worship," "an offering of the Gentiles," and "a harvest." Downs who believes that there were at least two different collection projects by Paul analyzes only three "collection passages," 1 Cor 16:1-4, 2 Cor 8-9, and Rom 15:25-31, and excludes Gal 2:1-10. He argues that Paul elucidates several characteristics of the collection: voluntary contribution, equality, and divine grace of God. As other scholars pay attention to the divine grace of God through Christ, so Downs emphasizes God's abundant grace

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<sup>35</sup> Beverly Roberts Gaventa, "The Economy of Grace: Reflections on 2 Corinthians 8 and 9," in *Grace upon Grace: Essays in Honor of Thomas A. Langford* (eds, R. K. Johnston, L. G. Jones, and J. R. Willson; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1999), 55.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 58



upon Gentile believers as an essential source that enables them to participate in the collection. He critiques the idea that the collection is obligatory and a religious duty<sup>37</sup> and explains that the collection is “a voluntary expression of love.” This sharing of material sources establishes a reciprocal relationship among the Jewish and Gentile believers and as a result, it creates “Christian equality” among them.<sup>38</sup>

Downs pays close attention to the “cultic terminologies” and argues that the Gentile believers’ material donation is an offering and their participation in the collection project is an act of worship:

Paul employs a number of cultic metaphors to speak of ‘the offering of the Gentiles’... This clustering of cultic language suggests that Paul’s understanding of the collection is governed by a particular metaphor, which I have identified as COLLECTION IS WORSHIP... That is, in metaphorically depicting the activity of collecting money for Jerusalem in terms of cultic practice, Paul frames participation in the relief fund primarily as an act of worship.”<sup>39</sup>

By metaphorically designating the collection as “an act of worship,” Downs hints to an anti-imperial nature of the collection: “Paul’s attempt to frame the collection as an act of corporate worship offered in service to God functions to subvert the values of patronage and euergetism by depicting an alternate mode of benefaction, one that brings glory, praise, and thanksgiving to God rather than to human benefactors.”<sup>40</sup> However, Downs’ main focus is not on social-political aspects of the collection but on religious and cultic elements of it. Downs stresses the central location of God in Paul’s collection. He argues,

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<sup>37</sup> Downs particularly opposes to the arguments of Richard S. Ascough who regards the collection as a religious duty. See Downs, *The Offering of the Gentiles*, 136.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 137-38.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 157.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 158.

“God is also the source of and power behind every act of human beneficence.”<sup>41</sup> In Downs’ understanding of the collection, God’s abundant grace is the beginning of the project and God’s glory through the thanksgiving of the believers is the end of it. The Gentile believers’ participation is also empowered by God’s grace on them. In this perspective, the collection is a religious ritual where God’s grace and glory can be manifested by the believers’ participation in it.

### Summary and Evaluation

Those scholars who emphasize God’s grace as an ultimate source for the collection nicely point to the religious dimensions that Paul’s project implies. They correctly clarify God’s divine involvement in human benefactions among the believers of the early churches. However, emphasizing the religious and cultic aspects of the collection clearly diminishes the socio-political situations of the early believers like poverty and the power dynamics among those who are involved in and around the project. Downs’ interpretation that the collection is “the offering of the Gentiles” is somewhat related to the eschatological reading in terms of regarding what the Gentile believers bring to Jerusalem as an offering, even though he does not clearly connect his idea to the eschatological pilgrimage of the nations.

### E. Materialistic Understanding

In order to understand Paul’s Jerusalem collection, some scholars investigate the economic circumstances of the early churches focusing on the problem of poverty among

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 164.

the inhabitants of the Roman Empire in general and among early believers of Pauline assemblies in particular. “Paul’s fundamental motivation for the collection is,” as David Horrell correctly points out, “to relieve the poverty of the poor among the saints in Jerusalem.”<sup>42</sup> His desire to help the destitute saints in Jerusalem led him to start the boundary-crossing collection project among early churches. It is important, therefore, to understand the poverty and the economic conditions that the early believers were experiencing.

Steven J. Friesen pays attention to the situations of Paul’s churches, focusing on the topic of economic inequality and poverty of the Roman Empire. He believes that poverty is not a result of individual choices or unlucky happenings but a consequence of “a social location that is created and enforced by society.”<sup>43</sup> In order to explain the economic environments of the Empire, Friesen suggests “an income poverty scale” with seven categories in it.<sup>44</sup> According to Friesen’s analysis, most of people in Paul’s

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<sup>42</sup> David Horrell, “Paul’s Collection: Resources for a Materialist Theology,” *Epworth Review* vol. 22, no. 2 (May 1995): 76.

<sup>43</sup> Steven J. Friesen, “Paul and Economics: The Jerusalem Collection as an Alternative to Patronage,” in *Paul Unbound: Other Perspectives on the Apostle* (ed. Mark D. Given; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2010), 33.

<sup>44</sup> The seven categories are: “1. *Imperial elites*: imperial dynasty, Roman senatorial families, a few retainers, local royalty, a few freedpersons; 2. *Regional or provincial elites*: equestrian families, provincial officials, some retainers, some decurial families, some freedpersons, some retired military officers; 3. *Municipal elites*: most decurial families, wealthy men and women who do not hold office, some freedpersons, some retainers, some veterans, some merchants; 4. *Moderate surplus resources*: some merchants, some traders, some freedpersons, some artisans (especially those who employ others), and military veterans; 5. *Stable near subsistence level* (with reasonable hope of remaining above the minimum level to sustain health): many merchants and traders, regular wage earners, artisans, large shop owners, freedpersons, some farm families; 6. *At subsistence level* and often below minimum level for sustaining health: small farm families, laborers (skilled and unskilled), artisans (esp. those employed by others), wage earners, most merchants and traders, small shop/tavern owners; 7. *Below subsistence level*: some farm families, unattached widows, orphans, beggars, disabled, unskilled day laborers, prisoners.” *Ibid.*, 35. Emphasis is original.

churches including Paul himself “hovered around the level of subsistence, just above or just below.”<sup>45</sup>

With this analysis in mind, Friesen sees the Jerusalem collection as “a form of economic redistribution.” He explains three characteristics of the Jerusalem collection as a distinctive form of economic redistribution among believers. First, “the contribution was communal: the money came from several groups of people rather than from an individual or family.” In this way, no particular person or family takes the role of benefactor who deserves big public honors. Second, “the collection came from people with modest resources living mostly around subsistence, not from the wealthy or well-to-do.” Paul’s collection is a movement of an accumulation process of people not with big surpluses but with modest resources. Paul emphasizes that the size of contribution is not matter in this movement but participation itself. Third, “Paul promoted occasional economic redistribution, not public largesse that diverted attention from the daily exploitation of the majority.”<sup>46</sup> Priesen believes that Paul is aware of the destructive impact of a public give-away event where wealthy patrons show their generosity by distributing small amount of money to the destitute. By doing so, they disguise the exploitative system of the imperial economy.

Paul who, in Priesen’s understanding, is living on the level of subsistence, attempts to establish a different economic system in a form of the Jerusalem collection. It is “a different system, an attempt by Paul to promote financial redistribution among poor people, Gentile and Jewish, in the assemblies of the eastern Mediterranean. It contracted

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 41.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 49-50.

the normal expectations of patronage and replaced them with an economy of voluntary redistribution among the saints.”<sup>47</sup> Paul’s goal through his collection project is to achieve economic equality among all the believers involved by his irregular and need-based redistribution.

Justin J. Meggitt also tries to figure out the living conditions of Paul and his believing assemblies by analyzing the financial situations of the people who lived in the first-century Mediterranean society. Meggitt develops his arguments by critiquing the so-called “New Consensus” among the New Testament scholars led by Gerd Theissen and Wayne Meeks. According to Meggitt, the new consensus for the economic situations of Pauline churches is that the early churches were “incorporating individuals from a cross section of first-century society, including some from the higher strata (who would be, amongst other things, economically affluent).”<sup>48</sup> This new consensus failed to truly challenge the old, and very different assessment maintained by Adolf Deissman – according to which the majority of the early believers were poor peasants and the oppressed like the slaves – a view that remained nearly unchallenged for a long time.<sup>49</sup> Based on his own research on the economic circumstances of the first century Mediterranean world, he argues that poverty is an absolute social phenomenon: “The under-developed, pre-industrial economy of the Graeco-Roman world created enormous disparities of wealth, and within this inequitable, rigid system the non-élite lived brutal

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 51.

<sup>48</sup> Justin J. Meggitt, *Paul, Poverty, and Survival* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1998), 99-100.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 100.

and frugal lives, characterized by struggle and impoverishment.”<sup>50</sup> It is in the harsh economic environment of the non-élite that Paul and the members of his churches shared the general experience of poverty and deprivation.<sup>51</sup>

According to Meggitt, Paul and the members of the early churches, who were suffering from poverty and living at the level of subsistence, had a strategy to survive: an “economic mutualism” among the early believing communities. Paul’s collection for the poor saints in Jerusalem is one of the ways in which economic mutualism was being practiced. The collection is aimed at, in Meggitt’s terms, “promoting *material well-being*” and is “thoroughly *mutual* in its character.”<sup>52</sup> Paul emphasizes the communal efforts to relieve the severe economic hardship that fellow believers in Jerusalem are experiencing. Through this collection, Paul attempts to give a sense of “mutual interdependence” among his early churches. Establishing economic mutualism among the early churches, as Meggitt concludes, is a survival strategy of Pauline churches in the midst of the impoverished first century Mediterranean society.

### Summary and Evaluation

Materialistic understanding is helpful in that it provides a general picture of the socio-economic situations of the Roman society in which Paul’s new believing assemblies were developed. It deals with the problem of poverty for which Paul organized the collection project. Meggitt’s argument, however, somewhat oversimplifies

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 73.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 75-154.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 158. Emphasis is original.

the various economic conditions of the believers of Pauline churches as those who were suffering from poverty. Priesen's "income poverty scale" with seven categories is more persuasive in terms of explaining the different economic circumstances of the members of Paul's churches.

#### F. Obligatory Reading

Several scholars find a sense of obligation undergirding Paul's collection for the poor saints in Jerusalem. A famous interpretation was that of Karl Holl who attempted to understand the Jerusalem collection as a Temple tax that the leader of the Jerusalem church imposed on Paul and his churches.<sup>53</sup> Prolonging Holl's idea, Nickle provides an extensive explanation of the Temple tax and comparison between Paul's collection and the tax. According to Nickle, all male Jews over twenty years old, except priests, and those who are affiliated with Judaism like the proselytes were under constraints to pay a half-shekel Temple tax. This money was to assist the cultic sacrifice offered in the Temple. For the delivery of the collected tax, there were three fixed times, usually half a month before the major festivals such as Passover, Pentecost, and the Feast of the Tabernacles. The Temple tax from the Diaspora was important not only because the amount of contributions from numerous Diaspora Jews was huge, but also because paying Temple tax was a way for the Diasporas to realize their sense of belonging, and of

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<sup>53</sup> Karl Holl, "Der Kirchenbegriff des Paulus in seinem Verhältnis zu dem der Urgemeinde," in *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Kirchengeschichte*. Vol. II. (Tübingen, Germany: J.C.B. Mohr, 1928), 44-67. See particularly 58-62.

ethnic and religious identity. Various pilgrims, deputies, and delegates from the contributing communities often accompanied the collected tax forwarded to Jerusalem.<sup>54</sup>

There are some similarities between the process of Paul's collection and that of the Temple tax: individuals contributed; setting aside money for contribution was promoted; the final destination of the fund was Jerusalem; and representatives of the contributing societies accompanied the collected money.<sup>55</sup> There are also several differences between them: the half-shekel Temple tax was mainly for the cultic sacrifice in the Temple, while Paul's collection was for the poor saints in Jerusalem; the tax was to be paid annually, while the collection was a one-time event; and the tax was a fixed amount of money, a half-shekel, and set up by legislation, whereas Paul did not recommend any amount of contribution and appealed to his church members for a voluntary participation.<sup>56</sup>

Stephen Joubert is another scholar who emphasizes the obligatory character of the Jerusalem collection. He explores the social exchange in the Graeco-Roman society, paying particular attention to the system of patronage and benefaction. His research comes to the conclusion that patronage and benefaction are different, but closely related systems of benefit-exchanges. Joubert therefore adopts the reciprocal relationship through benefit exchange as an interpretive framework for his reading of Paul's collection.<sup>57</sup> He

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<sup>54</sup> Nickle, *The Collection*, 74-87.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 87-89.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 90-93.

<sup>57</sup> Stephan Joubert, *Paul as Benefactor: Reciprocity, Strategy and Theological Reflection in Paul's Collection* (Tübingen, Germany: J. C. B. Mohr, 2000), 17-70. Joubert explains the basic processes of the interpersonal benefit exchange: "a. An individual renders a rewarding service to another person/small group; b. The person/small group, to whom the service is rendered, accepts the service; c. The recipient is obliged to the person who rendered the service; d. The recipient discharges his/her obligation by rendering



presents his own hypotheses applied to his reading of Paul's collection project. His basic conviction is that the collection is a benefit exchange between the leaders of the Jerusalem church and Paul, including his believing communities. "Reciprocity was at the heart of all benevolence in the ancient Graeco-Roman world. The bestowal of gifts initiated the establishment of long-term relationships."<sup>58</sup> Joubert believes that through the collection Paul and his churches began to build up a reciprocal relationship with the leaders and members of the Jerusalem church.

According to Joubert, the leaders of the Jerusalem church played the role of an initial benefactor by recognizing Paul's Law-free gospel and his own mission to the Gentiles. The benefit they bestowed on Paul was their acknowledgement of Paul's apostleship: Paul was appointed by God to proclaim the gospel to the Gentiles just as they were called to preach to the Jews.<sup>59</sup> This act of bestowing a benefit on Paul "indebted him to them."<sup>60</sup> They additionally requested from Paul the material help for the destitute in Jerusalem. Paul as a beneficiary owed "two things in response: gratitude and a material service."<sup>61</sup> He began to organize a collection project among his own churches not only to complete his obligatory duty to return the benefit to Jerusalem, but also to keep his honor by doing so. Paul employed various rhetorical strategies in order to complete the project and planned to deliver it to Jerusalem. By doing so, Paul wanted to

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a service to the first in turn; e. The original benefactor is placed under obligation by the return service to react with a second service." Ibid., 70-71.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 101.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 103.

“secure his future role as benefactor of Jerusalem.” However, “The conflicting ideologies of Paul and Jerusalem threatened the eventual acceptance of the collection.”<sup>62</sup> Because he anticipated possible rejection of the collection, Paul changed his view from reciprocity to giving out of selflessness.<sup>63</sup>

### Summary and Evaluation

This reading emphasizing the obligatory character of the collection has been somewhat neglected by some scholars partly because Holl’s interpretation of the collection as a Temple tax was regarded as much less persuasive. Joubert’s arguments, however, show several strengths. First, he utilizes the result of his research on the social phenomenon of the Graeco-Roman world, the benefit exchange, in his reading of Paul’s collection. Secondly, just as political readings correctly focus on the power dynamics implied in Paul’s collection project, so does Joubert’s understanding reveal the interwoven pressure and sense of obligation between Paul and the leaders of the Jerusalem church. Nevertheless, Joubert’s reading is not without shortcomings. His application of the interpretive framework, especially his “basic model of benefit exchange” that has eight phases<sup>64</sup> is too mechanical. Sometimes he squeezes or stretches Paul’s narrative of the collection in order to fit into the basic model.

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 71-72.

## Conclusion

So far, I have introduced six different approaches regarding the connotation of Paul's Jerusalem collection and have provided my evaluations of them. As mentioned earlier, scholars necessarily adopt their own interpretive framework, whether they acknowledge it or not. By so doing, when they interpret the "collection passages," scholars emphasize one or two elements of the collection and ignore other possibilities. Each of these six distinctive understandings of the collection might be "legitimate" by grounding their interpretation on a particular textual feature – e.g. by focusing their attention "behind the text," "in the text," or "in front of the text" – and be "plausible" by making hermeneutical or theological sense. My intercontextual reading of Paul's collection will be inevitably dependent on the previous interpretations and, at the same time, it will be distinctive by seeing them with Paul's idea of new creation and from the perspective of the needs of the Korean immigrant church. I propose to see Paul's collection as his endeavor to establish God's new economic system through his churches in Asia Minor. From this perspective the collection could be the symbolic project of the early churches to create God's new world in the midst of imperial powers.

## 2. Patronage as a Context to Understand Paul's Collection

In recent years, biblical scholars have begun to pay close attention to the Greco-Roman society, especially its patronage system as an important socio-economic and geopolitical environment for understanding Paul's Jerusalem collection. For this we need to consider the patronage system. One of the major social systems through which the Roman Empire could function was patronage. Richard P. Saller who has paid special

attention to personal patronage during the early Empire argues that patronal exchange between friends and patrons and clients played an important role not only in creating social networks, but also in maintaining political and economic activities. According to Saller, partly because of the little changes in social values and systems, and financial structures, “Romans appear to have continued to rely largely on patrons, clients and friends for loans or gifts in time of need, and assistance in financial activities.” In the area of administration “patron-client relations supply part of the answer to the question of how such a large empire was governed by so small an administration.”<sup>65</sup> The emperors were those who heavily relied on the networks of patronal relationships established and sustained through reciprocal exchanges between friends and patrons and clients in order to reach their subjects. The patron-client networks functioned as the channel through which the governing bodies could influence the people and the subjects could contact with the central authorities. “As a result, these networks are essential to an understanding of how provincials related to Rome.”<sup>66</sup> Human activities were also largely dependent on the reciprocal exchanges, which could produce multiple patronal relationships.

The basic element in the patronal relationship consisted of the reciprocal exchange between patrons and clients. Patrons often provided different forms of benefits and favors such as financial support or a position in an organization. Clients who then felt a sense of “owing”<sup>67</sup> (a sense of indebtedness) must give back service, honor, gratitude, or loyalty to the patrons. “The basis of the patronage system was power and authority,” as

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<sup>65</sup> Richard P. Saller, *Personal Patronage under the Early Empire* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 205.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 206.

<sup>67</sup> The one who received a kind of benefit would say “‘to owe’ (*debere*) one in return.” *Ibid.*, 15.

Wan argues, “so that a patron might stand to gain power and position in a vertical hierarchy from having expended on a client. The result was that the client became bonded to the patron out of a sense of gratitude, and the patron maintained that relationship through further giving.”<sup>68</sup> The patronage primarily relied on the reciprocal exchange between patrons and clients, which established, as a result, a hierarchical relationship among them and the network of these patronal relationships sustained the Roman society.

Honoring the patron was one of the ways to return the favor granted on clients. In many cases, this honoring was performed in public in order to contribute to the patron’s social status. “Clients could contribute to their patron’s social status by forming crowds at his door for the morning *salutatio*... or by accompanying him on his rounds of public business during the day and applauding his speeches in court.”<sup>69</sup> If clients receive some kind of benefits or favors, they assume a status of indebtedness, i.e. of “owing” something to patrons and must return appropriate service. In the Roman society, the person showing ingratitude, one who did not return the favor that he received, was often regarded as much worse than murderers and traitors.<sup>70</sup>

The “level” of the clients was determined by their ability to provide services in return. “Those who could exchange comparable benefits were friends of equal social standing, whilst most stood higher or lower in the hierarchy by virtue of their capacity to provide superior or inferior services in return.”<sup>71</sup> As a result, the patronal relationship

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<sup>68</sup> Wan, “COLLECTION,” 214.

<sup>69</sup> Peter Garnsey and Richard Saller, “Patronal Power Relations,” in *Paul and Empire: Religion and Power in Roman Imperial Society* (ed. Richard Horsley: Harrisburg, Pennsylvania; Trinity Press, 1997), 99.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 96.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 97.

often created a hierarchical social structure in which someone took the higher position and was regarded as superior and the beneficiaries of the granted favor became inferior and whose service in return involved honoring or publicly praising the patron. “The parties of both ends” of the patron-clients tie, as John K. Chow explains, “are unequal in the control of resources, and so differ in terms of power and status.”<sup>72</sup> The patronal relationship of superior or inferior was the backbone of “the hierarchical Roman society”<sup>73</sup> and became an important tool for maintaining the basic structure of the Roman Empire.

In the patronal hierarchy, the Roman emperor who was regarded as a super patron of the Empire, the ultimate center of power, was placed at the top. He often granted favors and expected honor and loyalty in return. The rich and powerful men and “local notables” who were friends or clients of the emperor were placed in the middle of the structure as patrons for the “ordinary members” who was the bottom of the hierarchy.<sup>74</sup> Patronage was a common system not only for the entire Empire but also for the social associations and even in the household. If the patronage system so deeply influenced the Empire and the social organizations in it, as Chow argues, patronage and its hierarchical relationship should be the background for understanding the social relationships among the assemblies of the saints.<sup>75</sup> From this perspective, it seems possible that there was a hierarchical power dynamic between the Jerusalem church and the other assemblies of

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<sup>72</sup> John K. Chow, “Patronage in Roman Corinth,” in *Paul and Empire: Religion and Power in Roman Imperial Society* (ed. Richard Horsley: Harrisburg, Pennsylvania; Trinity Press, 1997), 105.

<sup>73</sup> Saller, *Personal Patronage*, 11.

<sup>74</sup> Chow, “Patronage,” 105-06.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 125.

saints in Asia Minor and other areas based on the concept of “patron-client” relationship.

### 3. Reading Collection Passages

Instead of providing detailed exegesis of all the “collection passages” (Rom 15:25-31, 1 Cor 16:1-4, 2 Cor 8-9, and Gal 2:10), for the purpose of this study I hope to explain briefly about the delivery of the collection and the characteristics of it. In Romans 15, Paul, who must have been familiar with the patronage system of his time, seems to consider the Gentile believers to have a certain obligation because of the “favor” they received from the saints in Jerusalem. Paul identifies the Gentile believers as “debtors” (ὀφειλέται) because they have shared the “spiritual things” (πνευματικοῖς)<sup>76</sup> of the saints in Jerusalem. Even though Paul mentions Macedonia and Achaia specifically (Rom 15:26), indicating the believers in those areas, he assumes that all the Gentile believers shared the spiritual things of the believers in Jerusalem. His use of the phrase, τὰ ἔθνη, “the Gentiles” in Rom 15:27 denotes his belief. Because they shared the spiritual things of the saints in Jerusalem, they, as a result, became debtors. As debtors, in Paul’s understanding, the Gentiles must (ὀφείλουσιν) serve the believers in Jerusalem with material things (ἐν τοῖς σαρκικοῖς). Paul also notes that the Gentile believers in Macedonia and Achaia were pleased (εὐδόκησαν) to share their resources with the poor among the saint in Jerusalem.

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<sup>76</sup> Greek term πνευματικοῖς can be translated into “spiritual things,” “spiritual blessings,” or “spiritual gifts.”

## A. Characteristics of the Collection

Paul's repeated usage of several words shows what is at stake and suggests particular characteristics of the Jerusalem collection. First, the collection is a movement participating in a new economic system, which consisted of voluntary participation of the believers. Paul starts Rom 1:26 and 27 with the exactly same word, εὐδόκησαν, "they were pleased." This term implies the "voluntary" participation of the Gentile believers.<sup>77</sup> "The collection was" as Joseph A. Fitzmyer explains, "the result of freewill offerings given by these Gentile Christians to the poor of the Jerusalem church."<sup>78</sup> Those who were partaking in the collection were not forced to do so but happily joined in it. In 2 Cor 8:3, Paul mentions the voluntary contribution of the believers in the churches of Macedonia. Their participation, which was done "according to their ability, sometime beyond their ability,"<sup>79</sup> was "according to their free willing" (αὐθαίρετοι). As mentioned earlier, the scholars who prefer the ecumenical reading regard the voluntary participation as a primary character of the Jerusalem collection whose main purpose, in their opinion, was the unity and fellowship between the Jewish and Gentile believing communities. Those who want to see the Jerusalem collection through a ritual/religious perspective also emphasize the voluntary contribution of the Gentile believers. They had happily partaken in the collection because it was, in Downs' term, an "offering" and an "act of cultic worship." It is possible that the Gentile believers had happily participated in the

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<sup>77</sup> C. E. B. Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans* (ICC; Edinburgh; T & T Clark, 1979), 771. Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1996), 904.

<sup>78</sup> See Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Romans* (AB; Garden city, New York: Doubleday & Company, 1993), 722.

<sup>79</sup> Betz explains that the believers in the churches of Macedonia "voluntarily contributed to the collection in a way that seemed incompatible with their poverty." Hans Dieter Betz, *2 Corinthians 8 and 9* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 45.



collection because it was for the unity of the early churches or was an offering as a part of worship.

From the perspective of Paul's new creation, it is also quite possible that the Gentile believers had voluntarily contributed their resources because it could be used for building God's new world. The Gentile believers had known that their intended action of sharing material things with the poor saints in Jerusalem was the way through which they could establish God's new economic order. As Priesen rightly argues (as mentioned earlier), the collection could have been an important way to formulate "a different economic system" through which believers could have participated in the voluntary redistribution of financial sources for the poor in a faraway area of the colonies.

In 2 Cor 8:12, Paul is talking about the harsh and difficult situations from which the believers in Corinth participated in the collection: "ὅτι ἐν πολλῇ δοκιμῇ θλίψεως ἡ περισσεΐα τῆς χαρᾶς αὐτῶν καὶ ἡ κατὰ βάθους πτωχεΐα αὐτῶν ἐπερίσσευσεν εἰς τὸ πλοῦτος τῆς ἀπλότητος αὐτῶν," which can be translated, "For in a severe ordeal of affliction, the abundance of their joy and the greatness of their poverty overflowed in the wealth of their generosity." Paul's expression of "the abundance of their joy and the greatness of their poverty" shows a paradoxical combination. Margaret E. Thrall attempts to explain this unusual combination: "That poverty should produce generosity is something of a paradox, but the point may be that those who are themselves poor are better able to understand and sympathize with others in the like situation."<sup>80</sup> According to Paul, the believers in the Corinthian church have maintained the abundance of joy despite "a severe ordeal of affliction," which caused an extreme poverty among them. Barnett

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<sup>80</sup> Thrall, *Second Corinthians*, 523.

who tries to find the reason for the extreme poverty of the churches in Macedonia from the expression, “in a severe ordeal of affliction,” argues that the persecution against the members of the churches triggered the poverty among them.<sup>81</sup>

As Friesen insightfully argues (as mentioned above), many participants of the collection must have lived with very limited resources, just around “subsistence.” Paul’s mentioning of “the depth of their poverty” clearly shows that the difficult financial circumstances that many members of the Corinthian church were facing did not prevent them from participating in the fundraising project for the poor saints in Jerusalem. In spite of the series of suffering and extreme poverty, the Corinthian believers contributed more than enough, making it overflow. Paul clearly demonstrates that the collection was not done by an affluent individual or family but achieved through the communal participation of the people who were living with very limited resources. In this way, it has been a communal redistribution of financial resources among the early believers.

Second, the collection is a movement through which the abundance of God’s grace is shared. Paul uses the noun, *κοινωνία*, in Rom 15:26 and the verb, *κοινωνέω* in the next verse, 27. By using these “sharing” words, Paul denotes the character of the collection, sharing. From this perspective, the reason for the Gentile believers’ voluntary participation in the collection could be the result of their recognition of God’s abundant grace toward them. They could have recognized that what they had was not something they had obtained by their own efforts but the outcome of God’s grace toward them. In 2

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<sup>81</sup> Barnett tries to find the reason for the extreme poverty of the churches in Macedonia from the expression of “in great testing of affliction,” which denotes the persecution against the members of the churches. See Paul Barnett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1997), 393.

Cor 8-9,<sup>82</sup> Paul specifically emphasizes God’s grace by putting the expression, “τὴν χάριν τοῦ θεοῦ” (2 Cor 8:1), at the beginning and “χάρις τῷ θεῷ” (2 Cor 9:15) at the end of his “collection” discourse. At the beginning, Paul says that “the grace of God” granted to the churches of Macedonia enabled them to “overflow in a wealth of their generosity” (2 Cor 8:2). As he concludes his own statement on the material contribution, Paul reemphasizes “the surpassing grace of God” (τὴν ὑπερβάλλουσαν χάριν τοῦ θεοῦ, 2 Cor 9:14). This surpassing grace of God is fully expressed in the sacrifice of Christ on the cross.<sup>83</sup> By underlining God’s abundant grace for the Gentile believers, Paul implies that it has been God’s grace that enabled them to participate in the collection.<sup>84</sup>

The awareness of God’s plentiful grace on their lives may have led the Gentile believers to recognize that their role in the Jerusalem collection was that of mediator. They were not the ultimate giver of the material things but the ones who were called to deliver it as “middlemen.” Wan correctly describes this role of “middlemen”:

“Accordingly, the Corinthians are no more than middleman who must be faithful stewards of what has been entrusted to them.”<sup>85</sup> They could not proclaim the ownership of what they had because it did not belong to them but God. They were stewards and stewardesses who had been entrusted by God for managing the material things. Financial resources they were taking care of were not their own but something God allocated to

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<sup>82</sup> In these two chapters, Paul uses the exemplar contribution of the members of the Macedonian churches to urge the believers in Corinth to participate in the collection.

<sup>83</sup> Ralph P. Martin *2 Corinthians* (WBC 40; Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1986), 252.

<sup>84</sup> Gordon D. Fee emphasizes the central role of the grace of God in the collection. According to his understanding, for Paul the collection is “an active response to the grace of God.” Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1987), 812.

<sup>85</sup> Wan, “COLLECTION,” 214.

them. They were also “middlemen” who were supposed to deliver what God wanted to provide to the people in need. By delivering and distributing God’s material blessings among the poor in Jerusalem on behalf of God, they were sharing the abundance of God’s love and participating in God’s new economic system where all participants could get and enjoy a new life that Christ initiated through his death and resurrection.

Third, the collection is a movement, which has been done out of a sense of obligation. In Rom 15:27, Paul utilizes the noun, ὀφειλέτης, and the verb, ὀφείλω. Using those two words in the same verse, he distributes a sense of obligation. As mentioned earlier, Paul identifies the Gentile believers as “debtors” and says that they “must serve” the saints in Jerusalem with material things.<sup>86</sup> Paul’s usage of the imperative, ποιήσατε, in 1 Cor 16:1 intensifies this sense of obligation. Paul says, “Περὶ δὲ τῆς λογείας τῆς εἰς τοὺς ἁγίους, ὡς περ διέταξα ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις τῆς Γαλατίας, οὕτως καὶ ὑμεῖς ποιήσατε,” which can be translated, “About the collection for the saints, as I ordered the churches of Galatia, you must do also.” Paul explains the content of the order that he gave the Galatian churches in the next verse. In Rom 16:2, Paul “orders” each member of the assembly to put aside and save what they gain on the first day of each week.<sup>87</sup> By doing so, in Paul’s opinion, there would be no need to collect, when Paul arrived there (Rom 16:2). Paul’s usage of series of “mandatory” terms such as “debtors,” “must serve,” “ordered,” and “must do” shows his sense of compulsion, which seems to conflict with

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<sup>86</sup> According to Garnsey and Saller, in the patronage system, “the language of debt and repayment regularly appeared in discussions of exchange between friends or patrons and clients.” Garnsey and Saller, “Patronal Power,” 97.

<sup>87</sup> Garland explains that Paul uses the expression, “the first day” in order to avoid “the heathen term ‘Sunday.’” According to him, on the first day “Christians gather for the breaking of bread to honor the Lord” and “to remember the sacrifice of their Lord.” Paul argues, at this gathering, they also should remember the poor among the saints in Jerusalem. David E. Garland, *1 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2003), 753.

his mention of voluntary participation of the Gentile believers, in his words, “according to their free will” (2 Cor 8:3). Robert Jewett correctly explains the collection as “a combination of freely chosen goodwill on the part of Gentile churches and of their obligation to repay the original Jewish churches for spiritual benefits.”<sup>88</sup> However, Jewett’s argument that “[t]o the ancient mind there was no necessary contradiction between goodwill and obligation,” is not persuasive enough, because Paul’s different descriptions of the collection, voluntary on the one hand, and mandatory, on the other hand, are still seemingly contradictory.

#### B. Understanding Contradictory Statements

How can we understand the two somewhat contradictory nuances that Paul expresses through his adoption of voluntary and mandatory terms? There can be several possible ways to interpret Paul’s conflicting statements. First, there is a certain sense of ambiguity in the collection project. As mentioned earlier, the collection was not a short-term project that Paul could finish in several weeks or months. He had devoted a great amount of efforts and time to finish it during his ardent missionary and pastoral works. It could have started from the early period of his ministry, visiting Jerusalem with Barnabas and Titus (Gal 2:1) for the meeting with the acknowledged apostles where he was told to “remember the poor,” to his subsequent visit to Jerusalem for the deliverance of it (Rom 15:28-29). If the duration of the collection project had been like this, his idea of the collection could have been shifting from voluntary to mandatory and vice versa repeatedly like a pendulum, which might have caused ambivalence.

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<sup>88</sup> Robert Jewett, *Romans* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 930.

Second, from the perspective of the role of the believers as God's stewards and stewardesses, the Gentile believers were expected to participate in the collection in which they were supposed to give what God had assigned them. The Gentile believers did not have any right to refuse to partake in the contribution because it was required for them to do their job, following the order of their master. If they could be identified as "mediators," what had to deliver were the resources allocated to them. Paul may imply that it was natural for the Gentile believers who had enjoyed God's abundance in their lives to share what they had received from God with the believers in a desperate situation. If it was so, Paul might have the right to ask the Gentile believers that they "must" serve the saints in Jerusalem.

Third, from the perspective of the patronage system, it was mandatory for the clients to "return" something to their patron. Paul could have understood the relationship between the Jerusalem church and his new assemblies as that of the patron and client. If so, the saints in the Jerusalem church, like a patron, had shared the "spiritual things" with their Gentile counterparts. The Gentile believers including Paul himself became clients who owed an obligation to the church in Jerusalem. Like other clients, the congregations of the believing assemblies in Asia Minor should give back a certain "service" to the Jerusalem church. In Paul's project of collection, the service<sup>89</sup> was providing material things for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem. By returning this "service,"<sup>90</sup> which signified that Paul was completing a basic requirement in the reciprocal exchange system,

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<sup>89</sup> Paul calls his effort for the poor saints in Jerusalem through the collection a "service" (διακονία). He repeatedly utilizes this term "service" either in its verbal form, διακονέω, or nounal, διακονία, in his collection discourses (Rom 5:25, 31; 2 Cor 8:4, 9:1, 12, and 13).

<sup>90</sup> It is very interesting that Paul uses the term, καρπός, "fruit" in order to refer to the collection in Rom 15:28. This usage may imply that Paul wants the collection to be known as "fruit" of his missionary work among the Gentile believers. See, Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 723.

Paul wanted to be free enough to start “new chapter” in his life, a new missionary journey to Spain. On the way to Spain he hoped to stop by the Roman believing community (Rom 15:28-29).

### C. Collection Delivery and Prayer Request

When Paul explains to the Roman believers his plan for delivering the collection to Jerusalem, he asks them to “join in his struggle” by praying to God on his behalf (Rom 15:30). Paul uses a unique term, συναγωνίζομαι, which could be translated into, “to join in struggle”<sup>91</sup> or “to strive together”<sup>92</sup> or “to contend along with.”<sup>93</sup> Jewett who prefers to translate it, “to struggle together,” explains this term as “a military and athletic expression.”<sup>94</sup> Through the use of this word, Paul indicates that he will be in danger, which he describes in the following verses. The content of his request consisted of two elements. The first request is “ἵνα ῥυθῶ ἀπὸ τῶν ἀπειθούντων ἐν τῇ Ἰουδαίᾳ,” which can be translated, “so that I could be rescued from the unbelievers in the Judea.” Paul frets about the possible threat from the “unbelievers” in Judea. Who were they and why did they plan to harm Paul?

Scholars have proposed different views of the identity of a group of people whom Paul calls “the unbelievers.” Fitzmyer identifies them as “former Jewish acquaintances who have not accepted the Christian gospel and may resent his becoming a Christian

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<sup>91</sup> Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 725.

<sup>92</sup> Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 909.

<sup>93</sup> James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 9-16* (WBC 38b; Dallas, Texas: Word Books, 1988), 878.

<sup>94</sup> Jewett, *Romans*, 934.

evangelist.”<sup>95</sup> According to James D. G. Dunn, they were Paul’s “fellow countrymen who have rejected Christ and the gospel.”<sup>96</sup> Jewett believes that Paul is worrying about “the mortal danger of assassination by zealot in Judea.”<sup>97</sup> Even though it is not quite sure who “the unbelievers” were, it seems possible, according to Luke’s writing, that there were various groups of people who showed hostile attitudes, including hatred against him enough to plan attacks of bodily harm, or even murder.<sup>98</sup> The unbelievers, therefore, could have been non-believers who had antagonistic feelings and threatening attitudes toward Paul and what he had done and was doing.

The second prayerful request is “ἡ διακονία μου ἢ εἰς Ἱερουσαλήμ εὐπρόσδεκτος τοῖς ἁγίοις γένηται,” which can be translated, “[that] my service to Jerusalem could be acceptable to the saints.” As repeatedly mentioned earlier, the Jerusalem church leaders have asked Paul and Barnabas to “remember the poor” in Jerusalem. This became an important reason for Paul’s collection project. If Paul’s collection has been his faithful response to the request of the Jerusalem leaders, why is Paul expecting a possible refusal of his efforts? This question can be somewhat easily solved. In the previous chapter, I described the power dynamics between Paul and the nomistic faction in Jerusalem church and James’ possible support for the faction’s sending a delegation to the Galatian churches. The powerful ones in the faction, who might have exercised an influence on the leaders of the church, might not have liked the idea that Paul and his Gentile delegates

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<sup>95</sup> Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 726.

<sup>96</sup> Dunn, *Romans*, 878.

<sup>97</sup> Jewett, *Romans*, 935.

<sup>98</sup> Luke provides many incidents of attacks and hostile actions against Paul (Acts 9:29; 13:45, 50; 14:19; 17:13; 18:12; 19:9; 20:3, 21: 26-36). According to Acts 23:12, there was a group of Jews who made an oath neither to eat nor drink until they could kill Paul.



were coming to Jerusalem with a relatively huge amount of financial aids for the poor among the saints. If the powerful ones of the faction had become more influential in the Jerusalem church, as Martyn argues,<sup>99</sup> it is quite possible that Paul was worrying about his delivery of the collection and potential rejection in Jerusalem.

Another important question still remains: why does Paul want to deliver the collection to the saints in Jerusalem even though he is quite anxious about the threat and possible rejection? The answer for this question can be possibly provided, when we inquire into the collection passage in Galatians and the power struggles related to the project.

#### Conclusion and Summary

Even though it is not quite clear whether Paul's Jerusalem collection project was a fully voluntary and/or mandatory movement, several things seem fairly certain. The collection was a sharing of the abundance of God's grace shown in different forms of "spiritual things" and "material things" between the Jerusalem church and the believing communities in the Mediterranean basin. It has been also one of Paul's enthusiastic projects to embody God's new economic system, which requires the Gentile believers' active participation. Paul's prayerful request to the Roman believers shows the existence of a certain power dynamics between Paul and the influential ones in Jerusalem church including the church leaders.

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<sup>99</sup> J. Louis Martyn, *Theological Issues in the Letters of Paul* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1997), 25-32. Dunn, in a similar line of thought, explains, "the faction designated as 'sham brothers' in Gal 2:4 probably gained in numbers and influence" among the believers in Jerusalem. Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, 879-80. Moo admits that there could have been a group of nonbelieving Jews who put a pressure on the members of the Jerusalem church not to receive the collection, Moo, *Romans*, 910. Jewett believes that the members of the Jerusalem church were "under extreme pressure from nationalistic zealots." Jewett, *Romans*, 937.

#### 4. Jerusalem Collection in Galatians

Among the collection passages the one found in Galatians is the shortest: just one verse, 2:10. That is why many interpreters often ignored the existence of this verse in their investigation of Paul's collection. The verse, however, plays an important role in understanding Paul's arguments in the first two chapters of the letter. It can be particularly helpful in terms of comprehending Paul's relationship with Jerusalem and his effort to establish God's new world through his churches. The collection can be an exemplary affair that sums up the power dynamics Paul involved and the project Paul initiated.

##### A. Divine Installation of the Apostleship and Distance from Jerusalem

From the first verse of the letter to the Galatians, Paul stresses his apostleship by putting the word, ἀπόστολος, right after his name. Paul denies that his apostleship has any connection with human agency (1:1). He argues that he became an apostle not by human commission or allowance but by Jesus Christ and God only. By mentioning Christ and God, Paul is emphasizing a divine installation of his role as an apostle. Paul's declaration of heavenly appointment may imply a serious challenge to Paul's apostleship in the churches of Galatia just as it has happened in other churches such as the one in Corinth (2 Cor. 10:7-10; 11:5-6). His argument may indicate that Paul's apostleship was at stake.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Barclay believes that the opponents raised question about Paul's apostleship and the adequacy of his gospel. See John M. G. Barclay, "Mirror-Reading A Polemical Letter," in *The Galatians Debate: Contemporary Issues in Rhetorical and Historical Interpretation* (ed, Mark D. Nanos, Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson Publishers, 2002), 380; repr. from *JSNT* 31 (1987). See also F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the*

Paul's denial of any association with human agency and stressing the divine induction of his apostleship is extended to the origin of his gospel.<sup>101</sup> He uses a "double-denial" – his gospel is neither of "human origin" (1:11) nor of "human source" (1:12). He asserts that his gospel originated from the revelation of Christ (1:15-16). Even though it is not quite certain that by mentioning "δι' ἀποκαλύψεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ," "through the revelation of Christ" (1:12), Paul is referring to his encounter with Christ on the way to Damascus in Acts 9:1-9 or other possible encounter implied in 1 Cor 15:8. Paul is arguing that his gospel is directly from Christ and that it is Christ who has revealed it to him.

Paul's argument for God's divine selection goes back to the time of his mother's pregnancy of him. He elucidates God's setting him apart and calling him while he was in his mother's womb (1:15). He argues that God has revealed Christ to him so that he could proclaim Christ among the Gentiles (1:16). Paul's autobiographical narrative, particularly his use of several important words, is very closely related to his introduction of himself in the first verse of the letter to the Romans. In Rom 1:1, Paul says that he is a called one (κλητὸς) who is being set apart (ἀφορισμένος) for the gospel (εὐαγγέλιον) of God. In Gal 1:15-16, Paul states that God set him apart (ἀφορίσας) and called (καλέσας) him through the grace of God so that he could preach the gospel (εὐαγγελίζωμαι) to the nations. Paul's

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*Galatians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1982), 25-26. Longenecker argues that the main argument of the first two chapters is a combination of two issues such as "the legitimacy of Paul's apostolic ministry" and the "instructive model of Christian transformation." Bruce W. Longenecker, *The Triumph of Abraham's God: The Transformation of Identity in Galatians* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998), 148-50.

<sup>101</sup> About the debates on the original of Paul's gospel, see Seyoon Kim, *The Origin of Paul's Gospel* (2d. ed.; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002).

repeated use of the same and similar words shows his conviction of God's divine calling and installation of his main mission, preaching the gospel of Christ to the Gentiles.

By arguing for his divine pre-selection, Paul parallels his selection by God with that of Jeremiah<sup>102</sup> and a servant in Isaiah's "song of God's servant."<sup>103</sup> Paul's mentioning of God's calling even from his mother's womb and its connection to Isaiah's description of God's servant may suggest that, as F. F. Bruce describes, he comes to recognize his vocation as a servant of God who would bring "God's saving light among the Gentiles."<sup>104</sup> Richard B. Hays who pays a particular attention to Paul's use of language and images from the book of Jeremiah and Isaiah argues, "Paul's call must be understood on the pattern of the OT prophetic call narratives... Paul saw this event not as a conversion from one religion to another, but as a summons by the God of Israel to undertake a special prophetic mission."<sup>105</sup> Through this parallel, Paul is rhetorically emphasizing his divine calling by placing himself in the tradition of the great prophets in the Hebrew Bible.

Paul once again denies any human involvement in his decision of going to Arabia. He argues that when he received God's revelation for the Gentiles, which became his own gospel, he did not seek any human consultation for his next step (1:16). He chose to go to Arabia and then to Damascus instead of going up to Jerusalem to see the apostles

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<sup>102</sup> Jeremiah explains God's pre-selection of him while he was in mother's womb: "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations" (Jeremiah 1:5, NRSV).

<sup>103</sup> A servant in the second song of God's servant's songs argues that "Listen to me, O coastlands, pay attention, you peoples from far away! The LORD called me before I was born, while I was in my mother's womb he named me" (Isaiah 49:1, NRSV).

<sup>104</sup> Bruce, *Galatians*, 92.

<sup>105</sup> Richard B. Hays, *The Letter to the Galatians* (NIB XI; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000), 215.

(1:17). Furthermore, Paul asserts that when he actually visited Jerusalem three years later, he met only Cephas and James, the Lord's brother (1:18-19). Paul emphasizes that his argument for the least human involvement in his ministry is not a lie (1:20).

In the first chapter of his letter, Paul highlights the divine calling of his apostleship and denies any human influence on his own gospel by keeping a distance from the leaders of the Jerusalem church. His arguments may suggest two things: Paul wants, on the one hand, to highlight his apostleship, which has been somewhat at stake because of the activities of the opponents among the Galatians. Paul carefully prepares, on the other hand, his audiences to be ready for his audacious demand for both equal position with the Jerusalem leaders and independence from their influence.

## B. Approval and Equal Position

Paul's rhetorical arguments continue in the second chapter. His main arguments, however, are shifting from arguing the authenticity of his apostleship and from keeping a distance from the leaders of the Jerusalem church to demanding an equal position for his mission work among the Gentiles and claiming an independence from the influence of the Jerusalem church.<sup>106</sup> In the midst of his arguments for equal position, Paul reveals an unequal power struggle between him and the acknowledged leaders of Jerusalem. I have already described the power dynamics between Paul and the opponents who were supported by the nomistic faction in Jerusalem. Here I want to focus particularly on the relationship between Paul and the leaders of the Jerusalem church as expressed in his

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<sup>106</sup> Ehrensperger argues that one of the main purposes of Paul's narrative in Gal 1:3-2:14 is Paul's defending his "independence from other apostles, and particularly from those in Jerusalem." Kathy Ehrensperger, *Paul and the Dynamics of Power: Communication and Interaction in the Early Christ-Movement* (London: T & T Clark International, 2007), 41.

description of the Jerusalem council and the collection for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem.

Paul's remarks on his visit to Jerusalem and the laying of his gospel before the acknowledged leaders of the church show a power struggle between him and the leaders of the church. Paul says that he went up to Jerusalem with Barnabas (2:1) as the delegation of the church in Antioch. They also took along Titus with them as an example of their "circumcision free" mission. This would be Paul's second visit to Jerusalem after his encounter with the risen Lord on the way to Damascus. Kathy Ehrensperger pays attention to the delegation's decision to go up to Jerusalem. According to her, "the fact that the group from Antioch travels to Jerusalem and not vice versa demonstrates that there were hierarchical issues involved in the relationship between the two communities."<sup>107</sup> Before fully describing what happened in Jerusalem, Paul once more claims God's divine revelation as the main cause for his visitation. He was heading to Jerusalem according to a revelation (κατὰ ἀποκάλυψιν, 2:2), through which Paul emphasizes that it was God not human agent who motivated his visit. The real reason for his coming up to Jerusalem, however, was probably to lay his gospel before the acknowledged leaders. As mentioned earlier, Paul was quite sure that his gospel was from God and the good news that he preached among the Gentiles was originated from God's revelation. He strongly denies any human involvement in his ministry of gospel throughout the first chapter. If so, what would be the reason for Paul's presenting his "circumcision free gospel" in front of the leaders?

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<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 42.

Paul does not provide a specific reason for submitting his gospel before the leaders, but he gives a hint: he presented it before them “in order to make sure that I was not running, or had not run, in vain” (2:2, NRSV). Paul seems to fear that his ministry among the Gentiles could be in vain; his ministry could be fruitless. It seems possible that there was a certain opposition to Paul’s “circumcision-free” gospel in the Galatian area. Paul’s gospel was different from that of the Jerusalem church leaders in terms of not emphasizing circumcision as a mark of God’s election; not encouraging the believers to follow the law as the guidance of believers’ life; and not identifying the current Jerusalem in the land of Palestine as the “mother” of all believers. For those who have understood the Jerusalem church leaders as the “authentic” apostles of Christ, as Paul acknowledges in 2:9, Paul’s “circumcision-free” preaching could be recognized as a “different gospel,” which could be dangerous to the authority of the Jerusalem “mother” church. People might have assumed that Paul and his mission team were in a “subordinate position” in the relationship with the acknowledged church leaders and devalued his gospel as “unauthentic gospel.” In their eyes, the teachings of the leaders were the “true gospel” and were authentic because of the superior position of the church leaders.

If that was the case, Paul and his co-workers might have felt that they needed to do something in order to overcome or at least reduce the hostility. They could have believed that the best way to win over the opposition and to get rid of people’s assumption of their inferior position was to meet the church leaders in Jerusalem. As several scholars argue, Paul might have sought for his team a certain kind of “approval” from the pillar leaders in the Jerusalem church.<sup>108</sup> Hans Dieter Betz argues, “the

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<sup>108</sup> Joubert, *Paul as Benefactor*, 101.

delegation was sent to Jerusalem in order to get some kind of belated approval by the authorities for Paul's and Barnabas's gospel, that is, the gospel which was free from Torah and circumcision."<sup>109</sup> The acknowledged leaders' approval could have diminished the obstruction from the people who supposed their inferior position. The approval from the authority of the Jerusalem church could have been the initial purpose of their visit to Jerusalem.

The delegation from the church in Antioch met the leaders of the Jerusalem church in a private meeting, which formulates the "Jerusalem council."<sup>110</sup> During the council, Paul seems, however, to have received what he wanted to obtain, an official approval of his gospel. Even though Paul admits that the leaders of the Jerusalem church were "acknowledged leaders" among the early believers, he argues that they were not superior to him (2:6).<sup>111</sup> Paul argues that the leaders did not change the content of his gospel because there was nothing to be corrected in it. In other words, Paul emphasizes that the acknowledged leaders did not add anything to him, not only because the essence

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<sup>109</sup> Hans Dieter Betz, *Galatians* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 86.

<sup>110</sup> About the Jerusalem council, Betz provides a very interesting reconstruction of the meeting in terms of describing the power dynamics among those who participated and the outcome of it. Betz argues that there was one more faction that joined the council, a group of "conservative Jewish Christians whom Paul calls the 'false brothers.'" During the council meeting the leaders of the Jerusalem church took a middle position between the conservative Jewish group and the delegation from the Antioch church. Through the negotiation, the final agreement had been produced: "the delegation from Antioch had reached their goal" and "the conservative faction was defeated." The middle position that the acknowledged leaders took was untenable, as a result, they later "changed their position afterwards. Gal 2:11-14 shows that James may at that time have already changed...Peter had to flee from Jerusalem." Betz continues, "The middle group broke up and their position eroded, so that Jewish Christianity came under the control of the anti-Pauline opposition." Through the council, Paul was acknowledged as the apostle for the Gentiles and the excluded faction continued their anti-Pauline activities not only in Antioch (2:11-14) but also in Galatia through Paul's opponents. See Betz, *Galatians*, 82-83.

<sup>111</sup> Several English Bible versions have different but similar translations of the expression, "ὅποιοί ποτε ἦσαν οὐδὲν μοι διαφέρει" (2:6b): "whatever they were makes no difference to me" (NIV); "what they actually were makes no difference to me" (NRSV); "what they were makes no difference to me" (RSV). However, the Greek expression, especially the verb, διαφέρει allows a room for a different translation, "they are not superior to me."



of his gospel was not different from theirs but also because they did not have any power over him to change his gospel. As a result, they “approved” Paul’s gospel and mission for the Gentiles, which meant that Paul’s gospel was regarded as “legitimate” and “authentic” enough to be preached among the Gentiles. After receiving official approval from the leaders, he moves to the next step.

Paul changes his voice dramatically from 2:7 and describes his longing for an equal position with the Jerusalem church leaders. He uses an expression, “but on the contrary” (ἀλλὰ τοῦναντίον) in order to shift the flow of argument. If Paul has tried to diminish the hierarchical relationship between him and the acknowledged leaders, by so doing overcoming his inferior position, and to explain their approval of his gospel by adding nothing to it, now he attempts to reveal what he has in mind. Paul argues that the same God who made Peter an apostle for the circumcised entrusted Paul with the gospel for the uncircumcised (2:7). Paul parallels his apostleship for the Gentiles with that of Peter, the head-leader of the Jerusalem church, who has been selected for the circumcised. Paul intentionally mentions God’s entrusting him with the gospel for the uncircumcised before that of Peter in order to highlight the authenticity of God’s installation of his apostleship. He also argues that God’s grace that was granted (τὴν χάριν τὴν δοθεῖσάν) on him was so obvious that the Jerusalem church “pillars” such as James, Cephas, and John acknowledged it (2:9).

Their acknowledgement was shown by “giving the right hands of sharing to me and Barnabas” (δεξιὰς ἔδωκαν ἔμοι καὶ Βαρναβᾶ κοινωνίας). By stretching out the right hands of κοινωνία,<sup>112</sup> the pillar apostles at the council admitted the grace of God on Paul

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<sup>112</sup> Esler provides an interesting explanation of the expressing, “giving right hands.” According to him, the source for interpreting the phrase comes from the Septuagint where the exact express, “give right hands,”

and his team's evangelizing efforts among the Gentiles. What Paul wants to say is clear that there are two different mission projects between him and the Jerusalem church leaders, especially Peter: Peter for the circumcised and Paul for the uncircumcised. Paul is arguing that the two distinctive mission projects are the sign of sharing God's grace for the circumcised and uncircumcised. Paul argues that there is no difference between the two mission projects because of God's impartial grace bestowed on both missionary works. By these arguments, Paul rhetorically demonstrates his equal position with that of the acknowledged leaders in terms of his preaching gospel among the Gentiles.

In short, if Paul went up to Jerusalem in order to get an official approval of his gospel for the Gentiles from the pillar leaders of the Jerusalem church, he achieved what he wanted to do. The leaders "approved" the authenticity of Pauline gospel by adding nothing to it. They acknowledged God's grace granted on Paul and his mission team by shaking right hands of sharing with Paul and Barnabas. That was the end of the Jerusalem council. If Paul has sensed a certain feeling of indebtedness from the Jerusalem leaders' approval of his gospel, he knows that he needs to return their favor by giving something back to them.

### C. Independence and New Economy Through the Collection

In 2:10, Paul mentions only one thing that the Jerusalem church leaders asked the delegation from Antioch to do: "μόνον τῶν πρωχῶν ἵνα μνημονεύωμεν, ὃ καὶ ἐσπούδασα

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appears eleven times. "In almost all of these cases a person who is in a superior position, usually in a military context, gives the right hand to people who are virtually suppliants, who 'take it,' as a way of bringing peace to a conflict. It is not a gesture made between equals." Philip F. Esler, *Galatians* (London: Routledge, 1998), 132-33. Betz, however, argues, "it is clear that the agreement was made equal partners." Betz, *Galatians*, 100.

αὐτὸ τοῦτο ποιῆσαι,” which can be translated as “only they would that we should remember the poor, the very thing that I was eager to do.” Even though this request from the leaders of the Jerusalem church was not a part of the negotiation or the outcome of the council,<sup>113</sup> Paul took this request very seriously and was eager to complete it with enormous time and effort during his mission work among the churches that he established. It is commonly believed that this “remembering the poor”<sup>114</sup> refers to the collection for the poor saint in Jerusalem. It is interesting that Paul mentions the collection right before the story of his rebuking Peter and, in a broader literary context, right after his reports of the Jerusalem council where he demanded an equal position with the acknowledged leaders. An interesting question seems unavoidable: Why was Paul eager to fulfill the request of the church leaders from whom he tried to keep a distance? If Paul was so dedicated to the collection, what kind of socio-political meaning does the collection have for Paul in his relationship with the Jerusalem leaders and with the imperial social environment of the Roman Empire?

If we consider the patronage system of the Roman Empire, Paul who must have been familiar with this system may understand the request of the Jerusalem church leaders, “remember the poor” as the obligation that he should accomplish in order to return the favor that the church leaders bestowed by their approval of his gospel.<sup>115</sup> As

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<sup>113</sup> George explains that “remembering the poor” was not something added to the negotiation but the church leaders’ “sharing of need.” Timothy George, *Galatians* (NAC 30; Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 165.

<sup>114</sup> Betz elucidates that the term, μνημονεύωμεν, refers to “a specific, ongoing financial subsidy.” Betz, *Galatians*, 102. Longenecker also thinks that the verb as present subjunctive “points to a desired ongoing activity, and so is best translated ‘we should continue to remember.’” Richard N. Longenecker, *Galatians* (WBC 41; Dallas: Word Books, 1990), 60.

<sup>115</sup> As fully described earlier, Joubert interprets Paul’s collection from the perspective of the reciprocal benefit exchange. Several other scholars also notice idea of “debt” and “approval.” For examples, Thrall

clarified earlier, Paul identified the Gentile believers as “debtors” because they have received the “spiritual things” from the saints in Jerusalem. Paul firmly believes that the Gentiles believers “must serve” them in Jerusalem with the “material things.” If Paul regards the Jerusalem leaders’ approval of his gospel as a favor that he received from them, Paul may have wanted to be free from the patronal obligation--a client who received a favor from a patron must return the service--by completing their request. As mentioned earlier, in the patronage system, if a client could give back a comparable benefit to a patron, they could be regarded as “equal friends.” Considering the unequal power relationship between him and the Jerusalem leaders before the council and the feeling of indebtedness of Paul’s side because of the leaders’ approval of his gospel, Paul’s eagerness for the completion of the collection project can be easily understood.

On a surface level, Paul may have regarded the collection for the poor saints in the Jerusalem church as a returning service for the favor of its leaders. The collection could function as an ultimate sign not only for equal position of him with the acknowledged leaders but also for independence from the influential ones in the Jerusalem church, particularly the nomistic faction that attempted to control his churches by sending delegations.<sup>116</sup> As Betz argues, the collection “was also a demonstration of independence on the part of Paul’s churches.”<sup>117</sup> The participating churches also could escape from the imposed inferior position to the Jerusalem church. Paul’s opponents in

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thinks, “the collection is the acknowledgement and payment of a debt.” See Thrall, *Second Corinthians*, 514. Betz also explains that the collection is “‘living’ evidence that Paul was approved by the Jerusalem church.” Betz, *Galatians*, 103.

<sup>116</sup> Wan argues that to the Corinthian believers Paul has emphasized the establishment of equality “as motivation for contributing to the collection.” See Wan, “COLLECTION,” 212.

<sup>117</sup> Betz, *Galatians*, 103.

Galatia promoted a hierarchical relationship between the Jerusalem church as the central and “mother” church and the churches in Macedonia, Achaia, and Asia Minor as marginal and “baby” churches. In other words, through the collection, Paul is placing himself and the Galatians believers on an equal position with the members of the Jerusalem church and its leaders.

At a deeper level, the Jerusalem collection is an essential part of Paul’s effort to establish God’s new creation, particularly a new economic system. Paul’s rhetorical demonstration of his and his churches’ equal position with the Jerusalem church through “returning service” prepares his audiences for his essential arguments of creating God’s new society where various hierarchical and discriminatory boundaries become meaningless (3:28). Paul’s own expression, “the very thing that I was eager to do” (2:10b) shows that the Jerusalem collection is a vital part of his mission. As scholars argue, the shift from the first person plural (μνημονεύωμεν) to singular (ἐσπούδασα)<sup>118</sup> implies that the Jerusalem leaders’ request was, at the beginning, imposed on both Paul and Barnabas. However, after Paul’s separation from Barnabas because of the Antioch incident (2:11-14), Paul became the only one who was enthusiastic in completing this project. The collection was so important for Paul so that even when he became alone, losing his partnership with Barnabas, he wanted to accomplish it because it was indispensable part of his bigger project, establishing God’s new economic system. In this new system, a group of people, not a well-to-do individual or family, who are living around subsistence level, voluntarily donate financial resources for the poor in Jerusalem as an effort to share the abundance of God’s grace. The collection is a communal

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<sup>118</sup> Richard Longenecker, *Galatians*, 60-61. Bruce, *Galatians*, 126-28.

contribution so that it does not produce a primary patron who expects “returning service” or public honoring by the clients. In this new system, the only patron is God who enables the believers to participate in the collection. Paul has adopted the generally accepted cultural and conventional format of patronage in order to propose God’s new economic system. If it is the case, Paul’s collection for the poor in the Jerusalem church could be a climax of Paul’s arguments in 1:1-2:9 by summarizing his demonstration of an independent and equal position and preparing his audiences for his fundamental statements of God’s new social order.

#### Conclusion and Summary

The members of the Jerusalem church shared “spiritual things” with the Gentile churches and the leaders of the church bestowed a favor, the approval of Paul’s gospel at the Jerusalem council. By so doing, from the perspective of the patronage system, the Jerusalem church and its leaders naturally have taken a position of “patron” and Paul and his churches have become “indebted” like clients who should give back certain “service” to them. For Paul the Jerusalem collection has “a comparable benefit” and its delivery to Jerusalem plays a role of “returning service” to the leaders of the Jerusalem church. In Paul’s understanding, the collection is an ultimate sign of his churches’ independence and freedom from the hierarchical relationship with the Jerusalem church authority. The collection is also a part of Paul’s project of establishing God’s new creation, specifically God’s new economic system where the believers share God’s abundant grace with those who are in need.

## Conclusion

I have attempted to argue that the collection is a critique of the exploitative and hierarchical economic structure of the Roman Empire, which was expressed partly in the patronage system, and, therefore, is an alternative economic system. In this new economic order, believers of very limited resources voluntarily participate in sharing what they have with the poor saints in Jerusalem as a manifestation of God's abundant grace. For Paul, the ultimate patron is not the emperor like Augustus but God who enables the believers to share what they have. In this new economy, the contributing believers play a role of mediators who redistribute God's grace to those who are in need. This eschatological new economy has been initiated through the alternative assembly of believers, the *ekklēsia* as a tangible symbol of God's new creation in the midst of the imperial powers.

Paul's Jerusalem collection project and the participation of the churches in Macedonia, Achaia, and Asia Minor provide a very useful insight for the Korean immigrant church in the United States. In the second chapter, I have elucidated the economic inequality and unjust system of distribution of merchandise in the United States. Korean small business owners in the low-income neighborhoods have been the beneficiaries from this distributing structure and, at the same time, they often become its biggest victims. By taking part of efforts to build a more just society and better living conditions for all, Korean churches can initiate a communal project like the Jerusalem collection. Even though Paul's collection project did not change the economic system of the entire Roman Empire, the early believers' efforts to establish God's new economic

system through the communal contribution is a relevant and significant challenge for many believers who are living in the United States.



## CONCLUSION

In the introduction and the first chapter, I have presented various understandings of Paul's new creation, which have been plausible, legitimate, and valid for many readers of Pauline texts. I, however, point out a limitation of these understandings that they are often treating Paul's new creation as an abstract concept. This kind of treatment is not directly helpful for the Korean immigrant believers, including their churches, who are struggling to survive in harsh circumstances such as cultural unfamiliarity, language barriers, and American racism. Conceptualizations of Paul's concept of "new creation" may ignore or diminish its tangible features, which are clearly shown in Paul's establishment of an alternative assembly of believers, the *ekklēsia*, as an embodiment of God's new creation in the midst of the imperial powers. The concrete features of the new creation also appear in Paul's collection for the poor saints in Jerusalem through which Paul sought to create an alternative economic system against the exploitative and hierarchical structure of the Roman Empire.

About the methodology, I have clarified that every reader – including the most sophisticated scholar – interprets from the perspectives of a particular cultural and theological point of view and of a specific and concrete life context, which affect his/her reading of biblical texts. If reading is an encounter between a reader and a text through which ignored meaning potentials can be discovered, any given reader should admit his/her dependence on a particular viewpoints and concrete circumstances, which influence his/her reading of a text as a result. I have proposed an "inter(con)textual dialogue" as my reading strategy for interpreting Pauline texts. I have tried to read one

(con)text through the insights of the other and vice versa. By so doing, I attempt to create a genuine dialogue between the situations of Korean immigrant believers and their churches on America soil and the socio-cultural and geo-political conditions of Paul and his churches in Macedonia, Achaia, and Asia Minor.

In the third chapter, I have presented the circumstances of Korean immigrants as my life context, with which I approach Paul's new creation passages. At the end of the chapter, I have introduced a sociologist's sharp critique of Korean immigrant churches for failing to provide proper leadership during and after the Los Angeles riots in 1992. Korean immigrant churches remained within their comfort zone by offering very limited assistance to the wounded Koreans. As a result, they had to hand over their leadership position to non-governmental organizations that provided the most needed services such as legal, financial, and psychological supports for the victimized Koreans. I raised questions: Why did the Korean ethnic church fail to play a pivotal role of leadership, when it was urgently needed during and after the riots? Why did the ethnic church stay within its comfort zone and not propose new visions for Korean societies in America?

Through my inter(con)textual reading of Pauline "new creation passages," I have attempted to answer these questions. One of the answers should be that Korean ethnic churches did not fully understand their mission in the society. The church is an embodiment of God's new creation through which God wants to establish more just and peaceful society by breaking down the evil forces manifested in the form of hatred, racism, and oppressive social structures. I have also suggested that just as Paul initiated the Jerusalem collection project by encouraging the believers of his churches located in the cities of Mediterranean basin in order to establish God's new economic system, so

Korean immigrants churches should start their own communal project not only to build a more healthier immigrant community but also to create a more livable and peaceful society overall.

If we call Paul's missionary and pastoral efforts to establish God's new world in the midst of the imperial powers his "new creation project," we have identified important characteristics in this project. These characteristics could also be regarded as distinctive theological and pastoral views of Paul.

First, Paul's new creation project is communal and holistic. As mentioned earlier, one the characteristics of the Korean culture is holistic and community-centered. This kind of holistic and communal perspective is also highlighted in Paul's new creation discourses. In Romans 8, Paul presents "creation" as a holistic community in which human beings and non-human creatures are deeply connected together. By groaning together and suffering in the labor pains of childbirth together, this holistic community not only resists destructive powers but also anticipates God's redemptive and imminent intervention. If Paul's expression, "in Christ" refers to the believers' participation in Christ's self-sacrificing life and death, this participation can be connected to being a part of a believing community, the *ekklēsia*. By being "in Christ," they now belong to God's eschatological and egalitarian community where boundary-crossing unity among the participants can be realized. Paul's collection also has been a communal movement in which the Gentile believers voluntarily donated what they had as a symbolic action of sharing God's abundant grace on them.

Second, the new creation project is Christ-centered. Paul firmly believes that the death and resurrection of Christ has initiated God's new creation, which replaces the old

realm where various hierarchical and discriminatory elements such as national identity, religious practice, social status, gender difference (Gal 3:28) play a critical role in determining someone's essential features in society such as one's social position and economic status. The cross of Christ functions as the primary source for Paul's announcement of his death to the *cosmos* (Gal 6:14) and it also ushers him to the experience God's new creation. Paul's departure from the old world and his participation in the self-sacrificing life and death of Christ enables him to find himself in God's new creation. For Paul one's being "in Christ" (2 Cor 5:17 and Gal 5:6) is the critical prerequisite for entering into God's new world.

Third, Paul's new creation project is eschatological. Paul's usage of words such as *συνωδίνω* (Rom 8:22), *ὠδίνω* (Gal 4:19 and 27), *ἀπαρχὴν* (Rom 8:23), and "Jerusalem above" (Gal 4:26) indicates that Paul's understanding of God's new creation is basically eschatological. It is not something that happens within an individual believer such as religious conversion or spiritual rebirth through baptism. God's new creation has cosmic dimensions. The universal impact of the death and resurrection of Christ has initiated this cosmic transformation, which influences everything in it. As described in Romans 8, all created things are in labor pains together and waiting for God's imminent intervention for ultimate salvation through the destruction of the evil powers that enslave human beings and nature alike. By declaring God's new creation (Gal 6:15 and 2 Cor 5:17), Paul is announcing the end of the old world and the fading away of the masterful ruler of the old age, the Emperor, from his own kingdom. Through the death and resurrection of Christ, God's eschatological reign has begun in the midst of the imperial powers.

Fourth, the new creation project is anti-imperial and a resistant movement. Paul's anti-imperial argument is already hinted in his expression, "the present evil age" (Gal 1:4). The destruction of evil powers, enslaving the current world, becomes a prerequisite for God's new world. In God's new creation, there is freedom in Christ and the Holy Spirit. Paul's announcement of his death to the *cosmos*, a symbolic world of the present evil age, and his declaration of equality and unity of all people in Christ can be understood as his critique of the oppressive and discriminatory social structures of the Roman Empire. Paul's declaration of God's new creation in the midst of the Empire and the lordship of Christ instead of the Emperor also should be regarded as part of his concrete criticism of the Empire. Paul's collection through the Gentile believers who were living near the level of subsistence can be understood as his resistance to the hierarchical and exploitative economic structure of the Roman Empire, partly expressed in patronage.

Paul also expresses his negative judgment against the imperialistic attitudes of both the influential ones of the nomistic faction and the pillar apostles in the Jerusalem church. Their attitudes are clearly shown in their attempt to control the "baby" churches that Paul established with his "circumcision-free" gospel by sending the delegations to them and condoning their sending. The delegations demanded that the Gentile believers receive circumcision and observe the Jewish law. By identifying the slave woman, Hagar with the current Jerusalem and by presenting "the Jerusalem above" as a new mother for all the believers, Paul fundamentally critiques the current Jerusalem that Paul's opponents in Galatia have called "our mother." He criticizes the current Jerusalem and their leaders because they are trying to "imitate" (mimic) the Roman imperial system instead of Christ.

Fifth, Paul's new creation project is an alternative to socio-economic structures in the world. Paul's critique of the current Jerusalem, of the structure of the Roman Empire, and of the present evil age does not end with his negative announcements of their wrong doings and evilness. He offers an alternative community, an alternative city, an alternative system, and an alternative world. Paul presents an assembly of the believers, the *ekklēsia*, as an alternative community where God's new world not only can be tasted but also fully experienced. His critique of the imperialistic arrogance of the current Jerusalem results in his introduction of the Jerusalem above as an alternative city. By announcing this Jerusalem above, Paul implies that the symbolic position of the current Jerusalem as the center of the Christ-movement is getting over and is being replaced by God's eschatological new city. Paul's collection has been his enthusiastic effort to establish a new economy system in which the Gentile believers who were living with very limited resources voluntarily contributed their resources for the poor saints in Jerusalem. This collection is conducted as an alternative economic movement, which can replace the popular patronage system, which formulates a hierarchical relationship between the superior patrons and inferior clients. Against the present evil age, Paul introduces God's new creation as an alternative world where God's new heaven and new earth can be fully recognized. Sharing this vision for God's new world would be most beneficial for the Korean immigrant churches. In the midst of the imperial powers, the Korean immigrant believers are called to share Paul's vision for God's new world and to contribute to the establishment of God's new creation.

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