

“IN CHRIST” AS A HERMENEUTICAL KEY FOR DIVERSITY

Yung Suk Kim

Pauline scholarship, implicitly or explicitly, often treats the formula “in Christ” as a boundary maker,¹ by which “diversity”² is denied or eliminated by an ideological “unity,”³ which takes various

¹ See C. H. Dodd, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans*, (New York: R. Long & R. R. Smith, 1932), 87. Dodd equates “to be baptized” with “to be in Christ.” To be in Christ is to be in the church and to be in the body of Christ. Proper documentation is almost impossible to list scholars of this interpretation. A typical case of this boundary marker can be found in 1 Cor 7.39 “in the Lord” that a majority of scholars interpret *mono en kurion* as widow’s remarrying a fellow Christian only. Likewise, the NIV translation supports it explicitly: “A woman is bound to her husband as long as he lives. But if her husband dies, she is free to marry anyone she wishes, but *he must belong to the Lord.*” Among these interpreters are Tertullian, *Against Marcion*, 5.7; Cyprian, *Testimony*, 3.62; Jerome, *Epistles*, 123.5; Calvin, *First Epistle*, 168. Among modern scholars, Raymond Collins goes one-step further to argue for a culturally consistent marriage of endogamy in the Greco-Roman or Jewish society. See Raymond F. Collins, *First Corinthians*, (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, c1999), 303. However, a small minority insists that she needs only to stay with the community not forgetting her Christian duties. For example, see J.B. Lightfoot, *Notes on the Epi of Paul*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book, 1980), 225. G Fee adds to this tradition: “. . . one’s life come under the eschatological view of existence outlined in vv. 29-31. Such a woman . . . from such a radically different perspective and value system from that of a pagan husband that a mixed marriage, where two becomes one, is simply unthinkable.” Gordon Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans Publ., 1987), 356. However, my opinion goes against Fee because 7.12-14 suggests that Paul does not have a negative view about a mixed marriage. In fact, Paul believes the believer-spouse will affect the sanctification of an unbeliever-spouse.

² The concept of diversity that I use in this paper is rather evasive. One thing is, however, clear: diversity cannot come with an ideology of unity. More or less, I use it as close to pluralism that “I mean here the irreducible diversity of human life in all its aspects; the existence of distinctively different races, cultures, communities, traditions, views, values, etc.” See Theodore Brelsford, “Christological Tensions in a Pluralistic Environment: Managing the Challenges of Fostering and Sustaining both Identity and Openness” in *Religious Education 90:02:174-189*. In fact, the story of Tower of Babel in Genesis 11 can be read as a story of diversity; diversity is not God’s punishment because of human arrogance but it is God’s design/intention for the monolithic culture, unified/gathered people who maintained monoculture and mono-language (so in that sense ideology of unity is a problem). See Bernhard W. Anderson, “The Tower of Babel: Unity and Diversity in God’s Creation” in *From Creation to the New Creation: Old Testament Perspectives*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1994.

³ The ideology of unity often takes a form of unitary or unilateral imposition. For the concept or the role of ideology in contemporary society and culture see Louis Althusser, *Essays on Ideology*, (London: Verso, 1984); and see Thomson’s *Ideology and modern culture: critical social theory in the era of mass communication* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University

forms, such as an illusion of melting pot theory or an etiology of “sameness.”⁴ This view of “in Christ” as a boundary marker contributes to a narrow or an exclusive vision of community, separating Christians from non-Christians.⁵ However, I read “in Christ” from a postmodern,⁶ cultural perspective⁷ with my social location of minority/marginalized person,⁸ which then for me creates an

Press, 1990), 58: Thompson says: “the ways in which the meaning mobilized by symbolic forms serves to establish and sustain relations of domination: to establish, in the sense that meaning may actively create and institute relations of domination; to sustain in the sense that meaning may serve to maintain and reproduce relations of domination through the ongoing process of producing and receiving symbolic forms.” There is no pure, objective unity but an ideologized unity. In fact, the question is about whose unity: western unity or melting into western culture or western Paul. However, the fairytale “the Town Musicians of Bremen” tells us of true face of diversity. The ass, the dog, the cat and the cockerel work together to make a ghost look to chase off people and indeed the differences between them exist. Klara Butting, “Pauline Variations on Genesis 2.24: Speaking of the Body of Christ in the context of the Discussion of Lifestyles” in *JSNT* 79: (2000) 79-90.

⁴ Behind the melting pot theory or the etiology of the sameness is an ideology of unity and pressure of the sameness. David Sibley, *Geographies of Exclusion*, (London: Routledge, 1995), 23-24. Bell hooks, *Black Looks: Race and Representation*, (Boston: South End, 1992), 167. See also Ricardo Garcia, *Teaching in a Pluralistic Society: Concepts, Models and Strategies*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1982), 46. Ricardo says: assimilation is “a weapon for cultural imperialism.” Seminal texts of postcolonialism such as Said’s *Orientalism* and Fanon’s *The Wretched of the Earth* concern the western imperialism and domination (social, political, cultural). Furthermore, Said points out the problem of the western representation of the ‘east,’ which is defined as the “imagined other.” See also Lian Gearon, “The Imagined other: Postcolonial Theory and Religious Education” in *British Journal of Religious Education*, 23:2. 98-106.

⁵ For example, see Kelly Chong’s survey on ethnic congregation’s sociological behavior in relation to its own identity and outside community. Kelly H. Chong, “What it means to be Christian: the Role of religion in the construction of ethnic identity and boundary among second-generation Korean Americans” in *Sociology of Religion*, Washington: Fall 1998. 59:3:259-287.

⁶ Postmodernity is an ambiguous concept. I use here it as a kind of ways to challenge a given tradition to come up with more ethical, communal interpretation for all. Postmodernity is an open space and time for us to live today. In this regard, Mark Taylor rightly grasps the difficulty of postmodernity: “postmodern trilemma” in which he includes tradition/identity (keep), plurality (celebrate), and domination (resist). See Mark Kline Taylor, *Remembering Esperanza: A Cultural-political theology for North American praxis*, (Maryknoll, N.Y: Orbis, 1990), 31.

⁷ From a 21st century postmodern, cultural perspective, meaning of “in Christ” in the letter cannot not be monolithic or fixed; rather, it engages readers to negotiate, and discern a meaning only in the life context of readers, who have dialogue with the text. As scriptural criticism points out, every interpretation involves three dimensions/frames: contextual, analytical/textual, and hermeneutical/theological. See Grenholm, Cristina and Daniel Patte. “Overture: Reception, Critical Interpretations, and Scriptural Criticism.” Pp.1-54 in *Reading Israel in Romans. Legitimacy and Plausibility of Divergent*

“intervening space” of “in Christ.”⁹ Therefore, “in Christ” can be a struggling space and a time for a meaningful existence here and now in the midst of prevalently dualistic, and dichotomous Christian discourses in Christology, eschatology, ecclesiology and soteriology.¹⁰

In this paper, my maneuvering of the text is threefold: a) my analytical/textual dimension will focus on internal, literary image/figure of the “body of Christ” in 1 Corinthians, b) in dialogue with the context, and c) a theological/hermeneutical dimension of diversity.¹¹ Out of this threefold interpretation, ethically sensitive¹² and communally constructive meaning of “in Christ” emerges. I will divide into three parts: a) analyzing the current scholarship about the “in Christ” formula; b) analyzing the whole letter’s discursive structure; c) and proposing a new reading of “in Christ” as diversity.

Analysis of Scholarship

Indeed, there have been no major studies that have paid specific attention to “in Christ” in 1 Corinthians.¹³ Instead, scholars have sought to fix the meaning of “in Christ” in Paul’s letters.¹⁴ In part,

Interpretations. Vol.1. (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity International Press, 2000).

⁸ Marginality is difficult to live but it can be the source of empowerment and the spirit of resistance as Bell hooks and Jung Young Lee suggest in their books. Bell hooks, *Black Looks: Race and Representation*. (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1992). Jung Young Lee, *Marginality: the Key to Multicultural Theology*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995).

⁹ Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, (London: Routledge, 1994), 7.

¹⁰ Sally R. Munt, “Framing Intelligibility, Identity, and Selfhood: A Reconstruction of Spatio-Temporal Models,” available from <http://www.reconstruction.ws/023/munt.htm>; Internet accessed August 6, 2004.

¹¹ See Cristina Grenholm and Daniel Patte, *ibid*.

¹² Ethical interpretation of scripture in view of a contemporary life context is crucial to making the community and society livable and lovable. My ethical perspective is not the so-called indicative-imperative; rather, it is the “living” or “experience” with Christ, which is one-step.

¹³ “In Christ” appears in 1 Corinthians as follows: 1.2 (those who sanctified in Christ Jesus); 1.4 (God’s grace in

the interpretative difficulties lie in the dative construction of *en Christo*, which connotes various things: local, instrumental, temporal, modal, relation or respect, descriptive, 'in the presence of,' or 'in the presence of.'¹⁵ Among other things, Deissmann, one of the earliest figures to provoke a controversial interpretation of "in Christ," understood the phrase in a purely local sense, as the mystical union/relationship with Christ. What really matters in that mystical union is a personal, subjective experience with the Christ, while lacking a Christian ethic or an objective reality of "in Christ" such as an instrumental dative (the role of Christ).¹⁶ Neugebauer, however, replaces this kind of subjectivism with an objective reality of Christian existence and God's work in Christ (death and resurrection).¹⁷ For Neugebauer what is at stake is the basis of the church (ecclesiology, eschatology),

C.J); 1.30 (Christ is the source of our life in C.J: wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption); 3.1 (infants in Christ); 4.10 (you are wise "in Christ"); 4.15 (ten thousand guardians in Christ, but not the father); 4.17 (to remind you of my ways in C.J); 15.18 (those who have died in Christ have perished); 15.19 (If for this life only we have hoped in Christ); 15.22 (For as all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ); 15.31 (I die every day! That is as certain, brothers and sisters, as my boasting of you-- a boast that I make in C.J our Lord ; 16.24 (My love be with all of you in C.J).

¹⁴ See Barclay B. Williams, *Christ in you: A Study in Paul's Theology and Ethics*, (Maryland: University Press of America, 1999) for a historical overview of the "in Christ" scholarship. See also Hendrikus Boers, "The Meaning of Christ in Paul's Writings: A Structural-Semiotic Study" in *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 14 (1984): 131-144.

¹⁵ AJM Wedderburn, "Some Observation on Paul's use of the Phrases 'in Christ' and 'with Christ' in *JSNT* 25 (1985) 83-97.

¹⁶ Michel Bouttier. *En Christ: etude d'exegese et de theologie Pauliniennes*, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris: 1967.

¹⁷ Neugebauer thoroughly defines "in Christ" as "defined/determined by the eschatological event of the cross and resurrection, drawn in this "history" and *en kurio* as defined/determined by the circumstances that Jesus Christ is Lord of human history and as such calls for actions." Fritz Nuegerbauer, "Das Paulinische 'in Christo'" in *NTS* 4 (1957-8), pp. 124-38. See also Wedderburn, "Some observations on Paul's use of the Phrases 'in Christ' and 'with Christ'" in *JSNT* 25 (1985) 83-97. Wedderburn critiques Neugebauer's objectivistic approach that defines "in Christ" by circumstances such as the eschatological event, and insists that "in Christ" is not a definition made by such objective circumstances. Rather, the phrases of "in Christ" define "the circumstances in which something is or happens (objective genitive) and the circumstances which are thus defined many be the time, the place, the manner, etc."

Christ's salvific work (Christology, soteriology). In the same vein, Bultmann and Bornkamm also emphasize "in Christ" as an ecclesiological formula: "to belong to the Christian church is to be 'in Christ' or 'in the Lord' . . . and Christian congregations may also be called congregations 'in Christ.'"¹⁸

A. Schweitzer falls between these two extremes of subjective and objective approach.¹⁹ For him, "in Christ" is more than a subjective reality of mysticism; it involves both a subjective and an objective reality of "in Christ" here and now. Namely, "in Christ" points to the quality of an eschatological life here and now (subjective reality and union with Christ) and to the messianic community in Christ (objective reality). In fact, Schweitzer expresses ethical concerns about the Lutheran dichotomy of faith (as an internal quality) and the law (external quality), and about a dualistic time of now and then (*parousia*), so he incorporates two realities in the present-ness of "in Christ," that is, to live an eschatological time of the here and now "in Christ."²⁰

¹⁸ Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, trans. Kendrick Grobel, vol. 1. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951), 311. Günter Bornkamm, *Paul*, trans. D.M.G. Stalker, (New York, Hagerstown, San Francisco, London: Harper & Row, 1971), 155.

¹⁹ See Albert Schweitzer, *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle*, trans. by William Montgomery, (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1931), 388. Similarly but with different reasons, Andrie du Toit insists that "in Christ" has both objective and subjective uses depending on its uses in each letter. Under the title of "metaphorical local," he breaks down into two sub-sets, which are "Christ as the realm of God's salvational presence" (Rom 3.24; 6.23; 8.2, 39; etc) and "Christ/Lord as the realm of Christian's new existence." The latter again breaks into two modes of indicative (Rom 6.11; 8.1; 1 Cor 1.2-5; 4.10; 11.1; 15.18, 22; 16.24, etc) and imperative (Rom 9.1; 1 Cor 7.39; 9.1, 2; 15.31, 58; Gal 5.10). Andrie du Toit, "'in Christ,' 'in the Spirit' and Related prepositional phrases: Their relevance for a Discussion of Pauline Mysticism" in *Neotestamentica* 34 (2) 2000:287-298.

²⁰ Similarly, Käsemann also views "in Christ" as both subjective and objective realities. The major differences between these two lie in Käsemann's emphasis on apocalyptic new aeon in Christ and lordship of Christ. Ernst Käsemann, *Perspectives on Paul*. Trans. Margaret Kohl. (Philadelphia, Fortress Press, 1971), 102-121. J. C. Beker shares with Käsemann the apocalyptic time of new aeon with the new lordship in Christ. J. C. Beker, *The Triumph of God: The Essence of Paul's Thought*, (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 70-71. See also Andrie du Toit's, "'in Christ,' 'in the Spirit' and Related prepositional

These scholars see “in Christ” as a composite reality of subjective and objective realities in Christ.²¹ Even with these various connotations, they remain in the rigidly traditional reading of “in Christ,” which points to a fixed identity, and to a narrow conception of community. On the one hand, “in Christ” indicates a new identity for Christians (benefits of redemption, transformed new life), and on the other, it indicates an exclusive claim of Christology, eschatology, soteriology, and ecclesiology. There is no room for “otherness” or “diversity” in these claims. Neither the subjective or objective approach allow for “in Christ” to occupy a “third space” where Christians struggle to re-create a better understanding about “others” and to live Christ-like (modal).

In contrast with the previously discussed theological, historical approach (top-to-bottom, and abstract), the metaphorical approach turns to society as an entity (the community) to understand the very concrete reality of life in the community (bottom-up). Scholars belonging to this tradition read “in Christ” as a category of “belonging” to a body politic. This metaphoric approach further can be

²¹ Scholarly traditions about “the body of Christ” can be regrouped various way. See Robert Jewett, *Anthropological Terms*. Three distinct traditions are the “personal” model, the “corporate” model, and “metaphoric organism” approach. The personal model approaches the body of Christ as a personal union (Deissmann and A. Schweitzer are typical). Therefore, in this model, “in Christ” can be a local presence of Christ. There are also scholars who emphasize more on Christ’s bodily nature (especially on Christ’s historical death as a basis of church). For example, see E. Schweitzer, “soma” in *TDNT* vol. VII, p.1064-1069. Regarding the corporate model, the genitive construction of “the body of Christ” is possessive genitive (body belonging to Christ), the same as the metaphoric organism model. Here the body of Christ represents a corporate body, a collective body of God. Scholars differ on this view of corporality. E. Schweitzer strongly objects to the idea that the body of Christ is the same as the church. Meanwhile, J.A.T. Robinson considers the church to represent this holistic body of God. For Robinson, the body of Christ becomes a boundary marker whereas it is not so for E. Schweitzer, who clearly emphasizes the physical nature of the body of Christ, which becomes the basis of corporate community of the body of Christ. For E. Schweitzer, “in Christ” has a double-edged sword in the sense that it implies both a way of life in Christ and belonging to the body of Christ. The metaphoric approach breaks into four more sub-readings.

broken into four sub-readings. The first one is from Horsley's liberation reading that a Corinthian body plays a role of anti-imperial movement.²² The second one is from Theissen's (and Martin) sociological/functional reading that a Corinthian body is a place of "love patriarchy."²³ The third one comes from Neyrey's sociological/anthropological reading that a Corinthian body is a bounded system of a symbolic world.²⁴ The fourth one comes from socio-rhetorical tradition that a Corinthian body is a metaphoric organism, as the Greco-Roman high-class rhetoric does.²⁵ Among these sub-readings, the socio-rhetorical one draws our attention because it explicitly emphasizes unity/concord (*homonoia*) of the community. To name a few scholars of this sub-reading, Barrett, Dunn, Furnish, Mitchell, and Witherington read the body of Christ as a unified organism.²⁶ The body politic and "unity" theme is a key to reading 1 Corinthians. For example, 1 Cor 3.23 (*humeis de christou*, "you of

²² Richard Horsley, "1, 2 Corinthians" in Moore, Stephen D. and Fernando F. Segovia, eds. *Postcolonial Biblical Criticism: Interdisciplinary Intersections*, (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, forthcoming). See also Richard Horsley, *1 Corinthians*, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998), 173.

²³ Gerd Theissen, *The social setting of Pauline Christianity: essays on Corinth*, trans. John H. Schütz., (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, c1982), 36-37, 96-99, 121-140. Dale Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 92-96.

²⁴ Jerome Neyrey, *Paul, in other words: a cultural reading of his letters*, (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster/John Knox Press, c1990), 116.

²⁵ Margaret Mitchell. *Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation. An Exegetical Investigation of the Language and Composition of 1 Corinthians*, (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press. 1992). C. K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1968). Mitchell for example reads 1 Corinthians as a deliberative rhetoric in which the "body of Christ" is a central metaphor for an organism. Those who belong to Christ should have the same mind and thoughts (for unity).

²⁶ See C.K. Barrett's *1 Corinthians*, James Dunn, James D.G. Dunn, "'The Body of Christ' in Paul" in *Worship, Theology and Ministry in the Early Church: Essays in Honor of Ralph P. Martin*. Ed. Michael J. Wilkins and Terence Paige. JSNT Supp. 87, pp.146-162. V. Furnish, "Theology in 1 Corinthians," M. Mitchell, *Paul's rhetoric of reconciliation*, Ben Witherington, *Conflict and community in Corinth: a socio-rhetorical commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians*, (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans, 1995).

Christ”) and 15.22 (*hutos kai en to christo pantes zopoiethesontai*, “all shall be made alive in Christ”) are read only to support the theme of unity. Therefore, members of the community “in Christ” of “of Christ” should maintain the same thought and culture (a kind of melting pot in this sense) without cultural or convictional differences.²⁷ Barrett’s reading of Gal 3.28 pursues this idea of sameness: “in Christ” the differences of sex, race, and class are erased.²⁸ In contrast, Odell-Scott rejects the conventional view of the hierarchical, organism body as such, and views it as “a gathering of differences,” which is the locus of Christ, in whom people respect each other and recognize the differing voices.²⁹ Such an “in Christ” organism model excludes other possibilities: for example, “in the Lord” (7.39) prohibits widows from re-marrying non-Christians.³⁰ Ethnic minority groups similarly solidify their own boundaries against the outside community.³¹ This metaphoric organism model has the view of forensic salvation, together with a rigid understanding of community. Only

²⁷ Margaret Mitchell, *Paul’s Rhetoric of Reconciliation*.288.

²⁸ C.K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), 31.

²⁹ David Odell-Scott, *Paul’s critique of theocracy: A/theocracy in Corinthians and Galatians*, (London; New York: T & T Clark International, 2003), 21-23. Odell-Scott de-constructs Corinthians’ hierarchy and power claims.

³⁰ Paul Sampley reads for example “in the Lord” as a strict boundary marker (see notes p.2047 in *New Interpreter’s Study Bible*, Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2003) that widows should marry only fellow believers. However, in fact, there is another possibility to read this “in the Lord.” What is required for a re-marrying widow is not to distinguish who is “in Christ” and who is not; rather, the criteria or the challenge is as to whether one can commit one’s life (and body) to the Lord.

³¹ “In-group solidarity” is so strong in the community, which ends up with a strong boundary marker as shown in Korean second-generation study by Kelly H. Chong, whose survey suggests that there is a strong correlation between their identity and Korean ethnic heritage. The strong, almost exclusive, sense of being Korean-ness rooted in cultural and theological conservatism contributes to their strong sense of who they are as both Christian and Korean. The real interesting thing is that they do not consider themselves as American in terms of their identity formation. Rather, America is for them a country that needs Korean Christian enthusiasm and conservatism. This fact simply suggests that America is not a dialogue or learning partner but the object of mission and teaching. This very interesting case needs our attention because the canopy of “in Christ” for ethnic minority people serves to solidify their sense of ethnic identity at the price of ethnic enclaves, a product of conservative theology and cultural heritage.

those who are “in Christ” and agree to the doctrines or confessions of the church can be guaranteed in the body of Christ (the church). Traditional, theological approach also has the same view of this forensic salvation. All benefits (eschatological salvation) belong to these inside members. Here faith is a condition based on historical truth claim, which stands “once and for all.” Christ is the means through which benefits are guaranteed. Likewise, there are two-steps of ethical direction: “indicative-to-imperative” (“become what you are”).³²

However, the so-called “new perspective”³³ shifts our attention to the context of Jewish-Gentile relations (or conflicts) in Paul’s time, and the hermeneutical key to reading Pauline texts is the covenantal community where Jews and Gentiles are included in Christ. The metaphor of “in Christ” becomes the household belonging to the God who loves them. In other words, the focal point of Paul’s ministry is not theological salvation or righteousness as such but relations between Jews and Gentiles.³⁴

“In Christ” in 1 Corinthians

In this section, I will explore additional ways of reading the text and “in Christ” in particular. My reading of the Corinthian context posits the possibility of two opposing voices, between those

³² E. Schweitzer, “soma” in *TDNT* vol. VII, pp.1064. Morona Hooker, “Interchange in Christ and Ethics” in *JSNT* 25 (1985):3-17.

³³ James Dunn, *Jesus, Paul, and the Law: Studies in Mark and Galatians* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1990), ch.7.

³⁴ Because of Krister Stendhal’s monumental essay on Paul, “The Apostle Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West” in *Harvard Theological Review* 56 (1963), 199-215, and E.P Sander’s modification of Jewish understanding of salvation, many scholars now have a new perspective that the issue/concerns for Paul lie in Jews and Gentile relationship. The important metaphor in this approach is “community” in which Jews or Gentiles become one. See also Stanley Stowers, *A Rereading of Romans: Justice, Jews, and Gentiles*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 1-33.

“wise in Christ” (as sarcastically stated by Paul in 4.10) and those “sanctified in Christ Jesus” (1.2). Those “wise in Christ” seek to maintain their power of wisdom or knowledge, while those “who are sanctified in Christ Jesus” are foolish enough not to claim their own place as such.³⁵ Keeping in mind this larger scheme of the Corinthian context, I will examine the phenomenon of “denial of death”³⁶ by some “strong” Corinthians. Then, I will propose a threefold space/time of “in Christ”: a diversity space, a modal force of dying with Christ, and a “third space.”

“In Christ” as a boundary marker for the “Strong”³⁷ (the problem of “denial of death”)

Paul admonishes those who are “wise in Christ” (4.10-16) while sarcastically accepting his own foolishness on behalf of Christ. In fact, he uses “in Christ” here somewhat negatively to suggest that his opponents (the strong) claim their own place “in” Christ as a privileged boundary marker.³⁸ The “strong” people (the rich, the knowledgeable, the wise, enthusiasts, libertines) reject the message of the crucified Christ because it is an unconventional way of life, the most foolish way of life (1.18-2.16), while promoting their own ideology of unity, unilateralism, individualism, based on

³⁵ Paul himself identifies with the foolish of the most foolish people: “when slandered, we speak kindly. We have become like the rubbish of the world, the dregs of all things, to this very day” (4.13).

³⁶ Ernest Becker, *The Denial of Death*, (New York: Free Press, 1973), xii. He put the contemporary problem: “The root of humanly caused evil is not man’s animal nature, not territorial aggression, or innate selfishness, but our need to gain self-esteem, deny our mortality, and achieve a heroic self-image.”

³⁷ “The strong” by which I mean in this essay is rather a composite, which may include all power-seeking Corinthians. I am against a simple dichotomy of the rich and the poor (in economic/social term) proposed by Gerd Theissen, who analyzes Corinthian situations (conflicts) in terms of economic, social status conflict. Gerd Theissen, *The social setting of Pauline Christianity: essays on Corinth*, trans. John H. Schütz., (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, c1982), 36-37, 96-99, 121-140.

³⁸ These opponents are probably from Christ’s own family or close followers of Jesus. See Odell-Scott, *ibid.*, 47.

monoculture and mono-language.³⁹ In other words, these people deny the “death,” just as Ernest Becker points out the contemporary phenomena of “denial of death.”⁴⁰ These strong reject Paul’s ministry of reconciliation (to include all), egalitarianism, and diversity as can be seen in various conflicts in Corinthians.⁴¹ I read the Corinthian situation as a conflict between a unity group (the rich, the wise, enthusiasts, libertines) and a diversity group (the silenced voice, name-less or face-less people).

For these people, the rhetoric of “unity” aims to unify the whole community under their own interests, trying to establish a theocracy through their claiming of “in Christ.”⁴² At the same time, the oppressed, the slaves, the poor, and all other sorts of people cannot claim their own place “in Christ” as the strong succeed. What these downtrodden people want is not a dominant voice of unity, unilateralism, or individualism but a mutualism, diversity, and communalism as Paul argues what is at stake is co-dependency between husband and wife (ch.7), building up of the community (ch.13) of faith, love and hope.

³⁹ These voices of individualism, unilateralism, and unity, again, can be reconstructed from the whole letter, such as found in the rejection of the message of the Christ crucified. Throughout the letter, they are involved in the conflicts of hegemony (claiming their own place).

⁴⁰ Ernest Becker, *ibid.*,

⁴¹ The cases for these strong people’s rejection of Paul’s ministry of reconciliation include the lawsuit (ch.6) (through which the powerful people control the community), and the Lord’s Table where the rich dominate the table fellowship (ch.11). The most of all, the strong voices of the opposition to Paul’s ministry can be heard from the complexly weaved text of Corinthians as Odell-Scott insists in his book *Paul’s Critique of Theocracy*: they are the voices of hierarchy (women’s subordination) and theocracy (Christ’s family).

⁴² Odell-Scott, 17. See also Giorgio Agamben, *Homo sacer: sovereign power and bare life*, translated by Daniel Heller-Roazen. (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1998), 120. Agamben problematizes the state of exception, which can be so destructive with justification of power.

In the face of these opposing voices between a unity group and a diversity group, Paul mediates these opposing groups by the rhetoric of God's power, the Christ crucified, the power that supports the cause of diversity.⁴³ Furthermore, Paul de-constructs the ideology of "unity" of "the strong" in Corinthians by the image of the crucified Christ, to re-construct a community of "dying" and "diversity."⁴⁴ According to Martin's reading of Pauline theology in 1 Corinthians, Paul is against the ideology of hierarchical unity of the society (*homonoia* or concord).⁴⁵

"In Christ" as a diversity space for the community

In the previous section, I situated Paul's letter in the conflicting context of opposing voices in the Corinthian community including the social forces of hierarchical unity. I also asserted that Paul's strategy to counter the ideology of hierarchical unity is in the message of *the crucified body* of Christ. Paul indeed corrects the meaning of "in Christ" for the strong and relates its meaning to living in the crucified body of Christ. To find this connection between "in Christ" and the "crucified body of Christ" I closely examine the discursive structure of 1 Corinthians.

⁴³ Overall, this egalitarian understanding of diversity is centrifugal, emanating from God and directed toward all people, whereas the society's centripetal force of hierarchical unity pushes the community to conform to monoculture and unity. See also Bernhard W. Anderson, "The Tower of Babel: Unity and Diversity in God's Creation" in *From Creation to the New Creation: Old Testament Perspectives*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1994.

⁴⁴ The central symbol in 1 Corinthians is the Christ crucified, who is the symbol of weakness and the power of God, the foolishness and wisdom of God (1:18-2:5). Paul repeatedly emphasizes the preaching of the Christ crucified (1:23; 2:2) - other Pauline texts as well- and his "ways in Christ Jesus" (4:17), in whom he dies every day with boasting of the death of Christ (15:31).

⁴⁵ Dale Martin, *The Corinthian Body*; (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 92-96. According to Martin, body analogy (12:12-26) is used for Paul to attack the rhetoric of unity of society, which serves the strong only. However, Paul's body metaphor in ch.12 aims at serving the weak.

The discursive structure can be broken into three blocks:⁴⁶ the cross (1.18-2.16), the community (12.1-14.40), and the resurrection (15.1-55). The central figure in this structure is body, not as an organism metaphor, but as “living” body, directly associated with Christ’s life, death and resurrection.

[Diagram 1]⁴⁷

	<u>Cross</u>	<u>Community</u>	<u>Confession of hope</u>
	(1:18-2:16)	(12:1-14:40)	(15:1-55)
<u>Image of body</u>	Crucified <i>body</i>	Corinthian <i>body</i>	Resurrection <i>body</i>
	(broken and given out)	(struggling)	(hope-full)
<u>Time of body</u>	Past.....	Present.....	Future
<u>Ethics of body</u>	Faith.....	Love.....	Hope

My attempt here is give a brief description of each block to see how a different figure of body functions. *The crucified body* is a figure both of comfort for the downtrodden in the community and of God’s power, through which the community confronts the ideology of “unity” based on the exclusive claims of truth, charismatic gifts, wisdom or knowledge. In this way the image of the crucified body de-constructs human powers and re-constructs an alternative world based on God’s power, which manifests Christ-like living and dying in the daily struggles of a community that carries marks of the

⁴⁶ Victor Paul Furnish, “Theology in 1 Corinthians” in *Pauline* Theology vol. II. Ed. David M. Hay, (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), pp. 59-89.

⁴⁷ The following diagram seeks to suggest the complex role of the “body figures” in the letter and does not necessarily indicate chronology or causal relations from left to right; rather, it seeks to suggest the interrelationship of three main “body figures.”

cross on their bodies (2 Cor 4.10-11).⁴⁸ This crucified body is a basis of the Corinthian community, one which should live out the gospel of dying love, and remember the historical past of Jesus. In time, the crucified body represents the past, which gives the present life of the community the energy to build a community of love (ch.13). In terms of ethics, the crucified body represents historical faith, and provides the community with the rationale to live like Christ, in total obedience to the love of God. This Christ-like crucified body of the community is given out for others in the community and for other communities in the world.

The Corinthian body as "body of Christ" is a figure of a community of diverse people, differentiated in terms of gender, class, and ethnicity. In the figurative system of 1 Corinthians, this figure of the body (12.12-26) is not an organism metaphor but a figure, which promotes the embodiment of Christ through dying with Christ (12.27). "You" should be Christ-like by living out the Christ of the cross while hoping for the resurrection body. Christ's body is a work field. It has the force of a present tense exhortation to live the body of Christ here and now (15.58). The community lives the present in terms of an ethics of the body, in a present that stands between the historical dimension of faith and the future of hope. But it does not wait idly; it works to build the community with love.

Confession of hope in the resurrection body is a figure pointing to a community that lives the

⁴⁸ The experience of the cross-like living in the Greco-Roman world is not spiritualization at all, as Roman comic poet Plautus writes. Though having comic elements, but the contents of the plays are reflections of the real people, whose experience can be associated with Christ's cross manifest in believers. Those plays are real, shameful experiences of the lowest people in the Roman world, who often killed and mistreated, naked and invisible. For the high-class people make laughter because they are not like those tragic characters; however, the lowest people may break tears because they are like the characters. See Eric Segal, *Roman Laughter: The Comedy of Plautus*, (London: Oxford University, 1987).

future in the present. In chapter 15, Paul asks the community to trust in God with God's time. Looking to the community of past from the present, Paul re-affirms the necessity of the cross, and of the believers' Christ-like dying to the flesh (15.3, 31, 35-36, 42-44). Like a seasonal change, dying itself is necessary to live again. From beginning to end this figure carries with itself an exhortation that "you" should sow the body or flesh (dying like Christ; 15.35-36) and expect a "spiritual body"--Paul's oxymoronic confession of a new body, personal and communal. In this context, the precise nature of future body or resurrection is not an issue because Paul knows it is in God's hand and a mystery. What "you" can do is live the eschatological time of now through the radical identification with Christ's life and death.

From the discursive structure, the figure of the body of Christ plays a central role in deconstructing the language of "unity," "belonging," and "power" (1.27-31). Paul's "diversity" requires twofold steps (not chronological): the first one is to de-construct the ideology of "unity" of the strong;⁴⁹ the second one is for all Corinthians (strong or weak) to accept the "dying" of Christ as the basis for a new community. The second step is required for "all" because they have to accept the death of Christ in their own life. Diversity can be enlivened only if members live Christ-like, dying in baptism. The "dying" person, like Paul himself (15.31), does not boast of anything but the death of Christ; nothing is absolutized with the cross. Only in that sense of "dying," "Christ lives in me" and

⁴⁹ Examples of ideology of unity can be found in speaking in a tongue (ch. 14): Those who speak in a tongue have power of the Spirit and have a superior position against others who do not. That sense of pride or superiority pushes others to conform to the practice of speaking in a tongue. That is why Paul asks the community to speak clearly, as he put it: "I would rather speak five words with my mind, in order to instruct others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue" (14.19).

“Christ is the source of your life in Christ Jesus” (1.30). In other words, the “dying” Christ is the norm for our life, which is to live with him, by dying with him. This fundamental spirit of dying with Christ is the basis for community diversity, formed with the spirit of Christ (12.12-26), whose ethic is grounded in the love of Christ (ch.13), and whose vision is to see and live the future in the present with hope of a new body (ch.15).⁵⁰

“In Christ” as a modal force of dying with Christ⁵¹

The “Western” preoccupation with “belonging” language shows why their readings reflect the abstract, ontological, body politic of “in Christ” where no true diversity comes in. As shown in the history of scholarship, this phrase has been understood around the theme of ecclesiology. I am proposing here exactly the opposite side of this belonging, which is a non-belonging and a living of “*Christic*” body.⁵² Unlike the majority of scholars’ readings of “body of Christ” in 12.27 (that is, a

⁵⁰ Triad of faith, love and hope can be understood in the struggle of community. Cross is a basis of faith (historical death of Christ, the first discourse (1.18-2.16), which gives a present reality of Corinthian body in the sense of living out the Christ (community, the second discourse, (12.1-14.40) with love; the struggling community of the present lives with hope in the present while looking to the hope of God.

⁵¹ See Jung Young Lee, *Death Overcome: towards a convergence of Eastern and Western views*, Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1983. From a Taoist perspective, living and dying is not a separate one but the same; no linear but a circular time.

⁵² Deissmann and others who follow mysticism tradition minimize the believer’s personhood once united with Christ. In other words, individual differences melt into Christ. In addition, there is no active role of agency like Christ. However, Ricoeur and Yagi remind us that intersubjectivity or the role of individual believers as agents is crucial in our selfhood and Christian life. Especially, Yagi, from a Zen Buddhist perspective, suggests that believers can have Christ’s life/experience/views through living the Christ, radically identified with him. Seiichi Yagi, “I in the words of Jesus” in *Voices from the Margins*, 1st edition. Edited by R.S. Sugirtharajah. (London: SPCK, 1991), 330-351. See also Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*. Trans. Kathleen Blamey. (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1992).

possessive genitive, “body belonging to Christ”), my reading is an attributive genitive.⁵³ Accordingly, the body of Christ in 12.27 as a Christic body points to Christ’s life, death and resurrection. In fact, throughout the letter, the theme of the death of Christ is prevalent. Paul exhorts the Corinthian community to live this Christic body in 12.27. This Christic body is none other than dying with Christ (likely Paul’s baptism metaphor in terms of death).⁵⁴ Because of this Christic body, Paul dies every day with Christ (not to accept or condone an oppressive, torturing life) but to overcome self-seeking powers. Paul suffers from unwanted crucifixion, all sorts of degradation of life in the community and society. That is why he says: “I die every day (15.31).” For Paul to die with Christ is more than an individual experience of any spirituality but it has to do with sharing the experience of the one who suffered the death of a slave, who experienced the extreme limit of the human. In other words, when Paul talks about the Christ crucified (1.23; 2.2), he probably think of the slave’s death too, which is a daily shame and liminal experience between life and death.⁵⁵ Therefore, “in Christ” one experiences the border of the human as such. Based on this understanding of Paul’s radical identification with the Christ crucified, one can see Paul’s emphatic theology of dying with Christ and sharing it with others

⁵³ Examples of such attributive genitive: “body of sin” (Rom 6.6) means a “sinful body” when it is read as an attributive genitive and soma Christou can be read as referring to a “Christic body,” a space/time for the community’s Christ-like work.

⁴⁰ Odell-Scott, 22. See also Liddel-Scott, *Lexicon*, pp. 305-306. “Pre-liturgical, pre-Christian usage of ‘baptizo’ in Greek means quite literally ‘to dip,’ ‘to immerse,’ ‘to bury’ in a liquid, ‘dipping cloth in dye.’” Odell-Scott put it: “mistakenly, baptizo came to be understood in the hermeneutical tradition of the institutional church as a ritual cleansing which purifies the person and signifies the ‘ENTRY’ of the person being ‘baptized’ into the body of Christ.”

⁵⁵ Martin Hengel, *Crucifixion: in the ancient world and the folly of the message of the cross*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), 1-10. For a liminal experience and shame see Giorgio Agamben, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen, *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive*, (New York: Zone Books, 1999), 87-135.

in their most unfortunate situations. As such, the Christ crucified or “dying with Christ” should not be romanticized or spiritualized in an individual, psychological, existential or mystical level. For Paul it is participation with the lowly people through Christ. In that sense, for Paul the cross is not a once-and-for-all event that guarantees “salvation” through a sacrificial atonement (instead of “me”). For Paul, dying with Christ is a realistic, radical sharing of the experiences of those who suffer like Christ.⁵⁶ Accordingly, Paul reminds the community of his “ways in Christ Jesus,” which is “dying” love (4.17). Paul also recommends the widows to re-marry “in the Lord,” which is not a belonging language but a Christ-like attitude and commitment to live in dying (7.39). All shall be made alive in Christ (that is, to live like Christ) and all die in Adam (that is, to live like Adam) (15.22). In addition, one can see this kind of dying love in moral sexuality (5.1-13), which emphasizes mutual bindings/mutual dying in Christ (7.1-7) and mutual commitment.⁵⁷

“In Christ” as a “third space” (time and space)⁵⁸

From the perspective of diversity and a modal force of how to live in dying Christ-like, I

⁵⁶ From this perspective of radical participation with those who suffer like Christ, Mel Gibson’s movie *The Passion of the Christ* hardly give ethical, participatory implications for Christians to be engaged in violence-rampant world today. In the movie, Christ’s suffering was pictured absolutely necessary (the more suffering, the better) for salvation. Then the question is, What is the Christian responsibility or ethics? See Yung Suk Kim’s movie review at http://www.youaregood.com/moviereview_passion.htm.

⁵⁷ Gen 2.24: two become one in the sense of mutual commitment. See Klara Butting, “Pauline Variations on Genesis 2.24: Speaking of the Body of Christ in the context of the Discussion Lifestyles.”

⁵⁸ Homi Bhabha terms a “third space,” “being in the beyond,” and “in-between space” to express a resistant and creative space. In addition, I emphasize “third” as non-belonging space and time that no one or group dominates. Therefore, Trinh T. Minh-ha adds points out the importance of resistance in this struggle to find subjectivity. See Minh-ha, “Cotton and Iron” in *Out There: Marginalization and Contemporary Cultures*, eds. Ferguson Russel, Martha Gever, Trinh T. Minh-ha & Cornel West, (New York: M.I.T. Press, 1990), 327-336.

move to the final discussion of a postmodern/postcolonial space and time of “in Christ.” The traditional, theological, doctrinal, ontological, ecclesiological and “indicative-imperative” approach to “in Christ” fossilizes the Christian identity (fixed, exclusive) whereas my postmodern reading deconstructs, or delays the meaning of “in Christ” by re-thinking the image/concept of “in Christ” through space and time.⁵⁹ The primary space and time of our thinking and acting is not simply fixed, abstract, or linear but changing, concrete and circular.⁶⁰ The postmodern space and time can be termed a “third space” of struggling community, moving toward emancipation and justice for all. This space and time is not a given by the “above” but is realized, though not clearly or perfectly, if humans live in it in their continuous struggle of difficulties.⁶¹ In this sense, the third space and time serves as a locus for Christ-like life for believers, who locate their experience of “dying and living” in Christ. This space and time point to the living of the “Christic body” in the here and now.

The third space and time does not belong to any body or any group, in contrast to the Corinthian strong who dominate space and time for their own control. Rather, it requires endless modifications of human thoughts and actions, and embraces never-ceasing resistance to the temptation of fixation of space and time, because such temptation leads to an ideology of unity and dominance at

⁵⁹ Jacques Derrida, “Différance” in *Deconstruction and Context: Literature and Philosophy*. Ed. Mark C. Taylor. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), pp. 396-420.

⁶⁰ Elizabeth Grosz, *Space, Time, and Perversion*, (New York: Routledge, 1995), 92, 214.

⁶¹ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), 6, 11, 59, 73. Lefebvre corrects Kantian ideals of consciousness by the notion of the lived space, social space. Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of *habitus* points to a kind of space-body in which culture is inscribed. See Pierre Bourdieu, *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992), 133.

the sacrifice of creativity, diversity and freedom. It changes endlessly, as Fanon put it:⁶²

I should constantly remind myself that the real leap consists in introducing invention into existence. In the world in which I travel, I am endlessly creating myself. I am a part of Being to the degree that I go beyond it. ... It is by going beyond the historical, instrumental hypothesis that I will initiate my cycle of freedom.

The third space and time is not a solitary ethnic enclave or any running away from the struggle of difficulties. Rather, it requires resistant and transformative energy and commitment. In this regard, Kelly Hong's sociological study of second generation Korean Christians implies their failure to live their marginality in an intervening space and time.⁶³ This space and time confront the unwanted realities of abuse or oppression, social or cultural. Therefore, the issue is how to revive the voices, energies, hopes of the silenced, neglected people as we today listen to the kind of voices around us. It is an ending struggle for those who live "in Christ" as a third space and time, with no succumbing to an ideal of unity, or to a derision of the powerful who laugh for not being like those downtrodden. Thus, Hooks eloquently put it:⁶⁴

... [marginality] is also the site of radical possibility, a space of resistance. It was this

⁶² Frantz Fanon, *Black skin, white masks*, translated by Charles Lam Markmann, (New York, Grove Press, 1967), 229, 230.

⁶³ Against Niebuhr's *Christ and Culture* models, Jin Arai proposes "Christ-with-Culture," which is to embrace others as learning partners including all plurality of culture. In this regard, the case of Korean second-generation study does not live with this progressive mode of "Christ-with-culture." Jin Arai, "Religious Education in "Christ-with-Culture" from a Japanese Perspective" in *Religious Education* 91.2:222-237.

⁶⁴ Bell Hooks, *Yearning: race, gender, and cultural politics*, (Boston: South End Press, 1990), 149-152. As Hooks confirms the power of marginality, by distinguishing the chosen and involuntary marginality. Marginal power is an affirmation of one's marginal status as a third space and a re-creation of hope.

marginality that I was naming as a central location for the production of a counter-hegemonic discourse that is not just found in words but in habits of being and the way one lives. . . . not speaking of a marginality one wishes to lose – to give up or surrender as part of moving into the center – but rather of a site one stays in, clings to even, because it nourishes one’s capacity to resist. It offers to one the possibility of radical perspective from which to see and create, to imagine alternatives, new worlds. . . . This is an intervention. A message from that space in the margin that is a site of creativity and power, that inclusive space where we recover ourselves, where we move in solidarity to erase the category colonizer/colonized. Marginality is the space of resistance. Enter that space. Let us meet there.

Concluding Remarks

My reading of “in Christ” in 1 Corinthians is based on a close look at the text (as a symbolic world) and involves multiple dimensions of text, context, and hermeneutics as scriptural criticism states. I argue that a central hermeneutical key for reading 1 Corinthians is diversity (not unity), and that Paul’s argument for diversity for “all” is to de-construct the ideology of power or/and unity of the strong by the image of Christ crucified (1:27-31) and to re-construct the life of diversity by living out the Christic body. The attempts to grasp this Christic body in the context of plurality lead to a new space and time of “in Christ,” eventually allowing for the totality of God’s involvement in our life, with a recognition of others’ truths, with humble understanding that truths are provisional and confessional.⁶⁵ More importantly, what really matters in this context is to live the “third space and time” of a Christ-like life and death. It is *Christic body*.

⁶⁵ See Jin Arai, and Brelsford. See also Paul Yonggi Cho’s speech and interview to open a possibility of inter-religious dialogue in Korea. http://www.youaregood.com/yonggicho_english_yskim.htm. See also Krister Stendahl, “Religious Pluralism and the Claim to Uniqueness” in *Education as transformation: religious pluralism, spirituality, and a new vision for higher education in American*, ed. Victor H. Kazanjian, Jr. and Peter L. Laurence, (New York: Peter Lang, 2000), pp.181-183.