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Introduction

1. REVISITING THE ISSUE OF EQUALITY BETWEEN JEWS AND GENTILES

In his seminal essay "Paul among Jews and Gentiles,"[1] Krister Stendahl declared that "the main lines of Pauline interpretation—and hence both conscious and unconscious reading and quoting of Paul by scholars and lay people alike—have for many centuries been out of touch with one of the most basic of the questions and concerns that shaped Paul's thinking in the first place: the relation between Jews and Gentiles."[2] Stendahl particularly tried to demonstrate that the doctrine of justification by faith "was hammered out by Paul for the very specific and limited purpose of defending the rights of Gentile converts to be full and genuine heirs to the promises of God to Israel."[3]

His grasp of the importance of the relation between Jews and Gentiles, however, did not provide a further investigation on the issue of equality between Jews and Gentiles beyond the effort to emphasize Paul's commitment to the religious rights of Gentiles as equal to Jews. The social and practical meaning of equality between Jews and Gentiles and its further

1. Stendahl, "Paul Among Jews and Gentiles." This essay is based on lectures delivered in 1963–1964.

2. Ibid., 1.

3. Ibid., 2; see esp. 23–40.

implications for the problems, tension, and conflicts which developed within early Christian communities were not taken into full consideration. Nevertheless, Stendahl's approach took a major step toward liberating Pauline theology from the Occidental Christian interpretation which imposed on Paul the later Western problem of the introspective conscience[4] as well as the anachronistic dichotomy between Judaism and Christianity.

Although Stendahl had substantial impact on subsequent scholarship, the full potential of this rediscovery of the "historical Paul" for post-colonial and liberation-oriented approaches to the origin(s) of the Christian movement has not yet been adequately explored. In Korean Christianity, for example, the concrete historical context of Paul's thoughts and praxis among Jews and Gentiles has been entirely lost and replaced by the Western Christian, time-and-place-less universalism, introspective individualism, and soteriological dogmatism. This has led the majority of Korean Christians to regard Christian faith as a means for an exclusively individual and otherworldly salvation. Since Christian faith has been understood as assuming a universal identity, the "Korean" identity in its concrete socio-political and cultural context did not make much difference to the meaning of being "Christian." As all human beings, according to the dominant interpretation of Paul's justification by faith alone, are sinners before God, it is believed that differences in social status, gender, ethnicity, and culture do not count.

Such a universal tendency, however, has had an enormous impact on the general role of Korean Christianity in the history of Korea. Here, I want to point out some negative aspects that Western theological universalism imprinted on the general ethos of Korean Christianity. First, it has contributed less to the transformation of and resistance against the structural injustice of domination and oppression than to the consolidation and maintenance of the status quo of the Korean society. The dimension of socio-political and communal embodiment of Christian faith has been subsumed by an individualized, a-historical, and a-cultural faith. Secondly, the identity of "Korean" Christianity has been assimilated into Western cultural universalism in such a way that the particularity of "Korean" identity in its specific socio-political and cultural history has been rendered insignificant and inferior to the universal "Christian" identity, which was actually no less than an Occidental or European identity. Ironically, but not

4. See Stendahl, "The Apostle Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West," 78–98.

surprisingly, Christianity's assumed superiority over Judaism was translated into and identified with Christianity's superiority over other religions in Korea. In the Korean context, being "Christian" thus has not only been identified with being conservative toward socio-political transformation, but also with being exclusive toward traditional Korean religious and cultural heritage.

Although the social conservatism and religious exclusivism characteristic of a predominant form of Korean Christianity today requires a far more thorough investigation, the massive influence of the Western theological tradition cannot be underestimated. Especially, Western theological (soteriological) readings of Paul, more precisely of the doctrine of justification by faith, have to a great extent shaped the conservative general contour of Christian faith in Korea. Even the most progressive Christians in Korea are not quite free of the traditional interpretation of Paul. This may explain why Korean minjung theology—like most of Latin American liberation theology—while achieving a significant political reinterpretation of the praxis of the historical Jesus, has not attempted a corresponding new understanding of Paul.[5]

Recent New Testament scholarship has made significant contribution to the reassessment of assumptions, hypotheses, and social descriptions traditionally held especially regarding the origins of the early Christian movement and Judaism(s) of the first century Greco-Roman world. Particularly in the recent interpretation of Paul and the Christian movement associated with him, there have been some conspicuous shifts in interpretation which radically challenge the old pictures of Paul especially with respect to his relationship toward Judaism, the famous antithesis of Law-versus-Gospel, and the relationship between first-century Judaism and the Pauline Christianity.[6] To put it simply, the traditional image of the "dejudaized" Paul has been seriously challenged by some efforts of "rejudaizing" Paul, although the majority of Pauline scholarship continues to insist on the former.

5. In this regard, the work of Tamez, *The Amnesty of Grace* is a noteworthy exception. It is a reinterpretation and reconstruction of the doctrine of justification by faith from the standpoint of the poor and oppressed in Latin America. In the North American context, recently a few scholars have begun to pay attention to Paul's opposition to the Roman empire; Georgi, *Theocracy*; N. Elliott, *Liberating Paul*; and Horsley, ed., *Paul and Empire* and *Paul and Politics*.

6. Esp. E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*; Dunn, "New Perspective on Paul"; Segal, *Paul the Convert*; Nanos, *The Mystery of Romans*; Boyarin, *A Radical Jew*; N. Elliott, *Liberating Paul*; Tamez, *The Amnesty of Grace*; and Horsley, ed., *Paul and Empire*.

At the heart of these changes lies the effort to challenge the long-held traditional Lutheran legacy of Paul as a theological opponent of Judaism. Above all, the doctrine of justification by faith, which was placed at the center of Paul's theology by the Protestant theological tradition, has been decentered and rightly contextualized. Following Stendahl's argument, scholars have acknowledged that Paul's main concern was not Luther's quest for a gracious God, but his own defense for the equal status of Gentile Christians, as well as a new vision of community which subverts the basic concepts of Roman Empire.[7] Furthermore, they discovered that the picture of Judaism drawn from Paul's supposed negative statements on the Jewish Law is fundamentally wrong, with no correspondence to the ordinary Jewish self-understanding of the relationship between God's grace and Jewish observance of law within the covenantal relationship. This discovery that first-century Judaism had nothing to do with the picture stereotyped as the religion of "legalistic work-righteousness" can be attributed to E. P. Sanders's extensive study of Paul and Palestinian Judaism,[8] which has received wide acceptance among Pauline scholars.[9]

While acknowledging valuable contributions to the interpretation of Paul's theology with more attention to the historical context of first-century Judaism, I take issue with the so-called "new perspective on Paul,"[10] asking how much it has brought a real shift of paradigm in the study of Paul. The new perspective on Paul basically tries to explain Paul's stance toward the Jewish law, specifically toward "works of the Law" against the background of "covenantal nomism" which was characterized by Sanders as the generally prevailing religious ethos in Palestinian Judaism.

The main argument derived from this perspective is that Paul opposed Jewish covenantal nomism understood in nationalistic terms—"covenantal nomism as restricting the covenant to those within the boundaries marked by the law, that is, to Jews and proselytes."[11] Although such an argument seeks to make Paul's theology intelligible to the covenantal context of first-century Judaism and to explore the social function of the Law, I would

7. See Horsley, ed., *Paul and Empire*.

8. E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*.

9. E.g., Dunn, "New Perspective on Paul"; "Incident at Antioch"; Longenecker, *Eschatology and the Covenant*; Watson, *Paul, Judaism and the Gentiles*; Räisänen, *Paul and the Law*; Boyarin, *A Radical Jew*.

10. See Dunn, "New Perspective on Paul."

11. Dunn, "Theology of Galatians," 134–35.

argue that it remains limited to a primarily theological concern. It is still grounded on the supposed theological antithesis of Paul and Judaism. As Neil Elliott critically remarks, it "simply casts Bauer's old dialectic of 'Pauline universalism' versus 'Jewish particularism' in sociological terms."[12]

For many centuries since Paul left his letters to Western Christianity, theologians and scholars have been troubled by and preoccupied with a series of dichotomous formulae that they found crucial to Paul's theological doctrines such as law-gospel, flesh-spirit, works-faith, and so on. In order to avoid falling into another trap of the dichotomy of dejudaized Paul and rejudaized Paul, we need to problematize the definitions and nature of both terms of "dejudaized" and "rejudaized," and to be mindful once again of Paul among Jews and Gentiles as Krister Stendahl invoked.[13]

In this study, I challenge both the traditional interpretation of "dejudaized" Paul and the emerging reinvention of "rejudaized" Paul by revisiting and reassessing the problems involved in the Jew-Gentile difference in early Christian groups. I would argue that in both old and new interpretations of Paul, the differences between Jews and Gentiles are treated in rather simplistic, essentializing, and generalizing ways. Thus, I shall attempt to investigate the problems involved in the Jew-Gentile difference by relocating the issue into concrete socio-historical situations and discerning different and conflicting interests, tendencies and policies among different groups or members of the groups.

The question about equal status between Jews and Gentiles was one of the vexing issues among Pauline communities and has recaptured scholarly attention for the reinterpretation of Paul's theology and praxis. I revisit this familiar theme in Pauline scholarship by bringing a distinct angle to the fore, that is, the problem of equality and difference. At Paul's time it was closely linked with the relationship between Jews and Gentiles and played a crucial role in the historical development of early Christian self-understanding and social formation. Moreover, the problem of equality and difference has become a new focus of theoretical discourses within contemporary social criticisms and movements.

If, according to Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, the vision of egalitarian community without injustice, subordination, and discrimination was a significant aspect of the early Christian faith and praxis (cf. Gal 3:26–28),[14] in

12. N. Elliott, *Liberating Paul*, 70.

13. Stendahl, *Paul among Jews and Gentiles*.

14. Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, esp. 160–218.

what ways were Christian congregations expected to practice such a vision of equality between Jews and Gentiles? Given the ethnic, socio-religious, and cultural differences between Jews and Gentiles, how could these differences be related to an egalitarian vision of faith that recognizes "neither Jew nor Gentile" (Gal 3:26–28)? How did Paul and other early Christians understand and practice this asserted equality between Jews and Gentiles?[15] How could and did Jewish Christians or Christian Jews understand the status of Gentile Christians? On the other hand, what could and did it mean to Gentile Christians that they were equal to their Jewish fellow believers? How did the understanding of equality intersect with experiences of difference between Jews and Gentiles within Christian communities?

One of my arguments in this study is that the problem of equality and difference between Jews and Gentiles cannot be treated simply in terms of abstract, theological principles such as Paul's opposition to Judaism and "Pauline universalism" versus "Jewish particularism." At the same time it cannot be understood merely as Paul's justification of the status of Gentile Christians,[16] or a matter of the diversity of first-century Judaism and early Christianity. There is a need for a more contextual approach to the dynamic, relational meaning of equality and difference between Jews and Gentiles by paying particular attention to the specific situation of each local Christian community within the first-century Jewish and Greco-Roman context. This implies that both "Jewishness" and "Gentileness" need to be contextually related to the problem of equality and difference with reference to emerging hierarchical social relations between Jews and Gentiles in the early Christian movement. Who defines "difference" as inferior and wrong, hence as "otherness" to be repressed and excluded? Who claims "difference" as equal-but-different and emancipatory, hence as "identity" to be reclaimed and included? Under what political, social, religious, and cultural conditions? These questions crucial to the issue of equality (identity) and difference are not only relevant to the contemporary politics of difference, but also imperative for a fresh approach to the problem of equality and difference in early Christian communities of Jews and Gentiles.

15. Cf. Gal 3:26–28; Rom 3:29–30; 1 Cor 7:19.

16. Following Stendahl, especially John Gager and Lloyd Gaston overly emphasized this one-sided interpretation of the relation between Jews and Gentiles. See Gager, *Origins of Anti-Semitism*; Gaston, *Paul and the Torah*.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In the current interpretation of Paul and Pauline movement(s), I discern two different positions dealing with the issue of equality/difference between Jews and Gentiles within early Christian communities. At the risk of schematization, I define the first position as "equality without difference," and the second position as "equality with difference." A few scholars whose works are representative of different approaches and foci will be selectively reviewed.

2.1. Equality without Difference

(a) E. P. Sanders

As pointed out above, according to the traditional approach stemming from the Reformation, Paul attacked the idea that salvation can be earned by acts of obedience to the Law, as held by his Jewish or Jewish Christian opponents. Paul has thus been interpreted as a theological opponent of Judaism, whereby Judaism itself has been characterized as a religion of "works-righteousness." In his *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* E. P. Sanders made a fundamental challenge to such a stereotyped presentation of Judaism.

Sanders argues that Palestinian Judaism of 200 BCE to 200 CE should be understood principally within the context of the relationship between law and covenant. Based on a thorough investigation of the Jewish material relevant to that context, Sanders highlights a basic element of the Judaism of the period, which stands in direct opposition to the picture of Judaism described in the traditional interpretation of Paul: "In all the literature surveyed, *obedience maintains one's position in the covenant, but it does not earn God's grace as such*."[17]

Defining the basic character of the Jewish observance as "covenantal nomism," Sanders asserts that it was "the basic *type* of religion, *pervasive* in Palestine before 70 and known by Jesus and Paul."[18] Throughout his work, Sanders argues that the Judaism of the first century cannot be characterized as "petty legalism, self-serving and self-deceiving casuistry, and a mixture of arrogance and lack of confidence in God,"[19] and that it is misleading to

17. E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 420 (emphasis original).
18. Ibid., 422–26 (emphasis original).
19. Ibid., 427.

link Paul's negative statements against the Law with such a characterization. As Daniel Boyarin's deliberate comment on Sanders's undisputable contribution says, "He has laid the foundations for a reading which neither slanders Judaism nor slanders Paul by making his account of Judaism a slander."[20]

In order to explain Paul's attitude toward the Law, Sanders finds an alternative in his understanding of Paul's Christological soteriology: In Jesus Christ God has provided the salvation for all who believe, whether Jew or Gentile. Sanders continues to argue that for Paul "Righteousness *cannot* be by law, *since it is by faith*, not since doing the law leads to boasting."[21] He also says that "The promise *cannot* be inherited on the basis of keeping the law, because that would exclude Gentiles. But Gentiles *cannot* be excluded, for God has appointed Christ as Lord of the whole world and as savior of all who believe, and has especially called and appointed Paul as apostle to the Gentiles."[22] Thus, the antithesis of faith and law itself is not changed at all. Rather its ground is argued from a different perspective. Here, it is important to note that in his understanding of Paul's "by faith, not by law" Sanders seeks to combine Paul's Christological soteriology with the issue of Gentile inclusion, although the logical priority is given to the former and it is not accounted for how the two are tightly connected. Sanders draws the issue of Gentile inclusion principally from his understanding of Paul's Christological universalism, that is, "Christ as savior of *all*." But that universalism, Sanders argues, is only possible through faith in Christ, and therefore it is exclusivistic universalism, in the sense of "not by law."

One of the problems with Sanders's soteriological interpretation of Paul is that Paul's position is rendered as inexplicable within the context of covenantal nomism of the first-century Judaism which Sanders has presented so convincingly. At the same time Paul's position remains unique when compared with the views of other Jewish Christians. As Sanders himself recognizes, if other Jewish Christians also had faith in Christ and believed that they are saved by faith, then soteriological Christology does not seem to be an appropriate explanatory framework to account for different views, tendencies, and strategies with respect to issues involved in difference between Jews and Gentiles within the early Christian communities.

20. Boyarin, *A Radical Jew,* 47.
21. E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 484.
22. Ibid., 489–90 (emphasis original).

As a consequence, it is not surprising to see that Sanders deals with the practical dimension of the issue of Gentile inclusion and the equal fellowship between Jews and Gentiles within the Christian community in terms of "matter of behaviors" with respect to the Jewish law. According to Sanders, when the question is not about an entry requirement, Paul regarded important aspects of the law as "indifferent" or "optional," especially the requirement of circumcision, special days, and special food.[23] Sanders further argues that such a principle of "tolerance" toward the Jewish laws did not work in actual interaction between Jews and Gentiles within the Christian community. Sanders offers this reason: "If Jewish and Gentile Christians were to eat together, one would have to decide whether to live as a Jew or as a Gentile . . . The Antioch incident would seem to show that, if Jews were present, Paul would expect them not to observe the Jewish dietary laws."[24]

Did Paul really view the Jewish particularities embodying the Jewish way of life as the obstacle to Christian unity? Sanders presents the picture of Paul as a Jew who eventually "viewed it as the only behavior in accord with the truth of the gospel to live as a Gentile,"[25] for the sake of unity and equality for the Gentiles.

I will try to problematize his assumption that the observance of the Jewish laws is the only criterion that determines the "difference" between Jews and Gentiles. Sanders's discussion of the practical dimension of the equal fellowship of Jews and Gentiles almost necessarily evades a proper treatment of Rom 14:1—15:13, where, contrary to Sanders's view, Jews are expected to continue their practices.

(b) James D. G. Dunn

James D. G. Dunn fully accepts Sanders's basic understanding of Judaism's covenantal nomism by which obedience of the law was characterized as "maintaining" the covenantal relationship with God, not as a means of "entering" the covenant.[26] While generally agreeing with Sanders's description of the first-century Judaism, Dunn rightly observes the methodological limitation of Sanders's work: "The most surprising feature of Sanders' writing, however, is that he himself has failed to take the opportunity his own

23. E. P. Sanders, *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People*, 113–14.
24. Ibid., 177.
25. Ibid., 178.
26. Dunn, "New Perspective on Paul," 186.

ground-breaking work offered. Instead of trying to explore how far Paul's theology could be explicated in relation to Judaism's 'covenantal nomism,' he remained more impressed by the *difference* between Paul's pattern of religious thought and that of first-century Judaism."[27]

Thus, Dunn's main intention is to demonstrate how Paul and other Jewish Christians might be related to the covenantal nomism of first-century Judaism. Dunn finds the key clue from his exegetical elaboration on the textual and sociological meaning of the term "works of the law" in Galatians. Dunn observes that within the historical context of Judaism and the mind-set of the first-century Jews, the notion of "works of the law" became the fundamental identity marker, or boundary marker which distinguishes the Jews as God's covenant people from Gentiles and others. As such it refers to the observance of particular laws like circumcision, food laws and Sabbath.

Dunn points out that at a certain juncture of the historical development of early Christian movement(s), particularly at the Antioch incident, Paul came to see a problem involved in "covenantal nomism." In terms of "justification by faith in Jesus Christ," not "justification by faith" which reflects a basic Jewish understanding, Paul objects to the idea that "God's justification depends on 'covenantal nomism.'"[28] In attacking "justification by works of the law," Paul attacks a particular understanding of the covenant, that is, a "nationalistic or racial" understanding of the covenant. Dunn presents this as the precise point where Paul the Jew distanced himself from his fellow Jews and other Jewish Christians.

Regarding Dunn's contribution, at least two points need to be mentioned for my study. First, Dunn gave considerable weight to the historical significance of justification by faith in Jesus by relating it closely to covenantal nomism. He attempted to deal with the issue of covenantal nomism within the historical development of early Christian movement(s), taking into considerations when and how the issue became a matter of conflict between Paul and his fellow Jewish Christians. Second, Dunn brought the issue of identity to the discussion of justification by faith, making the issue of covenantal nomism a common ground for comparing different approaches among early Christian groups toward the problem of emerging Christian self-identity.

27. Ibid., 186 (emphasis original).

28. Ibid., 195.

Yet, there are some debatable points in Dunn's work. First, in his work Dunn consistently argues that Paul attacked the nationalistic, racial, and ethnic expression of covenantal nomism. However, Dunn does not seem to offer an understandable motivation for Paul's criticism of the nationalistic identity of the covenant, apart from the explanation that Paul understood Jesus' death and resurrection as the fulfillment of the covenant which transcends the ethnic boundaries of the covenant. But Dunn does not provide an explanation of why Paul understood Jesus' death and resurrection as transcending the ethnic boundaries of the covenant. Second, as far as the issue of identity is concerned, Dunn's approach appears to be more or less static. Although he rightly deals with the "social function of the law" in his discussion of the relationship of Paul to covenantal nomism, it still remains a question of whether Paul should be interpreted as totally denying the national identity of covenantal nomism in terms of Jewishness.

(c) Alan F. Segal

In *Paul the Convert: The Apostolate and Apostasy of Saul the Pharisee*,[29] Alan Segal presents a great deal of discussion on the problem of Jew-Gentile difference in Paul and early Christian communities. Segal appropriately locates the issue within the diverse context of first-century Judaism and identifies the crux of the problem with the question of ritual distinctions between Jews and Gentiles within early Christian groups as a Jewish apocalyptic sectarian movement. An important aspect of Segal's contribution lies in the complex way he articulates the significance of Paul's conversion experience in its personal and social effects for the understanding of the meaning of law and faith in Paul, his commitment to Gentile Christian communities, and consequently his position about the Jew-Gentile difference.

Dissociating his position from the traditional approaches to theological and psychological aspects of Paul's conversion, Segal urges us to see both personal and social aspects of Paul's conversion experience as integral to Paul's articulation of a new meaning of faith in Christ and its social consequences for Paul and his Gentile Christians. Segal also stresses that Paul's own personal conversion experience is tightly linked to his postconversion experience in the Gentile community. This double-edged—both personal and communal—experience is, according to Segal, what led Paul to attain a new understanding of "faith." Thus, Segal says: "Faith means more to Paul

29. Segal, *Paul the Convert*.

than remaining faithful and steadfast to the covenant. It is not something that Judaism or Jewish Christianity exhibits, but it *is* inherent in gentile Christianity. The paradigm for this type of religion is Paul's own conversion from the surety of his Pharisaic observances to the freedom and uncertainties of his gentile Christianity."[30]

Although Segal often uses somewhat totalizing words such as "Jewish Christianity" and "gentile Christianity" in describing different social formations of the early Christian movement, and tends to see them as separate entities, he is certainly rejecting the conventional understanding of Paul's conversion as a change in religion, that is, conversion from one religion (Judaism) to another religion (Christianity). Rather, Segal emphasizes that to Paul conversion means a "radical change in the community to which Paul give allegiance,"[31] and that by faith Paul talks about the centrality of faith for defining a new community to which he was converted. The new community is based on "the experience of transformation into the spirit through faith, which lives without the obligations of Torah."[32] According to Segal, this new faith means to Paul a radical revaluing the meaning of the observance of Jewish law, for he was once faithfully committed as a Pharisaic Jew.

Segal rightly insists that Paul's statements and arguments regarding the opposition of law and faith be considered as being derived not from any abstract theology, but from his experience with Gentile Christian congregations based upon his own conversion experience: "He is advocating a new definition of community in which the performance of the special laws of Judaism does not figure. This new definition is an attempt to enfranchise the community in which he lives, the community in which he learned the value and meaning of his religious conversion."[33]

Further, challenging the traditional approaches to the Pauline law-faith antithesis, Segal pinpoints the origin and core of the opposition of law and faith in the following statement: "The vexing issue of the ritual status of gentiles—and not their salvation or even philosophical issues of universalism or particularism or the value of the works' righteousness—directly occasions Paul's meditations on law.[34]

30. Ibid., 121 (Segal's emphasis).
31. Ibid.
32. Ibid., 122.
33. Ibid., 124.
34. Ibid., 125.

While Segal basically agrees with the argument of Stendahl, Gaston, and Gager that Paul made negative statements about Jewish law mainly for the defense of the religious rights of the Gentiles, he takes a different position from their assertion that Torah remains in effect for Jews in terms of "two separate paths—salvation for gentiles in Christianity and for Jews in Torah."[35] I agree with Segal's position, inasmuch as it underscores the central importance of faith in Christ for the definition of a new community of believers (*both Jews and Gentiles*)[36] within Judaism.

Yet, Segal's argument moves beyond this. Based on his reading of Galatians 2, especially Gal 2:15–16, Segal argues for the exclusive value of faith in Paul, meaning that faith excludes Torah for all—not only for Gentiles but also for Jews.[37] Interpreting the faith-law opposition Paul articulated in Gal 2:15–16 in soteriological terms, Segal argues that to Paul "ceremonial Torah is of no significance for salvation for *anyone*."[38] This is the point at which Segal differs from the Stendahl-Gaston-Gager position. According to Segal, since Jewish ceremonial law has no soteriological significance for all, Paul considers the observance of ceremonial law irrelevant to anyone. This leads Segal to suggest that Paul might have given up observing the ceremonial laws and even encouraged Jewish Christians to do so.[39] Thus, Segal maintains that Paul, as a consequence of his conversion experience and his commitment to his Gentile Christian communities, advocates the irrelevance of ceremonial Torah for salvation and promotes the eradication of ritual distinction between Jews and Gentiles. Segal explains this as Paul's consistent "ideological" position toward Jewish ceremonial law that functioned to differentiate Jews from Gentiles.[40] As far as Segal's focus on such an ideological position is concerned, it might not be wrong to associate his interpretation with the category of "equality without difference."

However, regarding the practical dimension of Paul's position toward Jewish ceremonial law and the Jew-Gentile difference Segal presents an

35. Ibid., 130.

36. Whereas Segal seems to overemphasize the Gentile composition of the community to which Paul was converted, I prefer to see more mixed nature of both Jews and Gentiles such as in the Antiochene community.

37. Segal, *Paul the Convert*, 130–33.

38. Ibid., 132 (emphasis original).

39. Cf. ibid., 130, 210. "There can be no doubt that Paul himself has not only preached the end of ceremonial laws, he has given up his adherence to them, though obviously not to their ethical impulse and statutes" (210).

40. See ibid., 201–18.

interesting argument, which allows much more complexity and flexibility for Paul's policy. Segal deals with the practical issues of circumcision and dietary laws within the early Christian communities more contextually and from a Jewish legal perspective, focusing on the importance of unity between Jewish and Gentile Christians or Paul's vision of a new, unified Christian community.[41] Mainly drawing on Paul's statements in1 Cor 7:17–20 and 1 Cor 9:20–22 as well as the story about Paul's practice of vows in Acts 18:18 and Acts 21:17–26, Segal argues that Paul often changed his practice regarding Jewish ceremonial law and made occasional compromises for the sake of church unity, but without violating his ideological principle of freedom from Jewish ceremonial law.

Paul's overriding concern for the unity of church, Segal argues, enabled him to make "a generous or diplomatic accommodation to the circumcised gentiles and Jews within Christianity, but it is not a compromise in principle."[42] Segal makes a distinction between Paul's ideological principle (= the abolition of Jewish ceremonial laws) and his policy of magnanimity (= accommodation to *Jewish Christians*):[43] "From Paul's perspective the accommodation is a kind of magnanimity. He outlines two axioms, an ideological position of strength and a diplomatic principle of conciliation."[44] Thus, Segal's discussion of Paul's practice and accommodating policy seems to be determined by his understanding of Paul's ideological principle. That is why Segal refers to Paul's practice as a "compromise," assessing it in light of Paul's ideological principle, as Segal asserts: "When salvation itself is not the issue, and especially when church unity *is* the issue, Paul, however, seems ready to accommodate . . . Although this is a compromise ritual position, Paul is not compromising his ideological position. Since Paul believes that his ritual is of no importance for salvation, whether he observes it or not is irrelevant. He chooses not to exercise his freedom to ignore them."[45]

Furthermore, although Segal tries to show how Paul accommodates himself to different situations to maintain unity between Jews and Gentiles within the Christian communities, Paul's compromise is explained basically in terms of his own accommodation to "the feelings of the circumcised

41. See ibid., 201–28, 224–53.
42. Ibid., 214.
43. Ibid., esp. 210–18 (my emphasis).
44. Ibid., 236.
45. Ibid., 239 (emphasis original).

gentiles and Jews within Christianity."[46] Segal seems to give less attention to the dynamic and social relations underlying the problems involved in the Jew-Gentile difference and especially varying patterns of Jew-Gentile hierarchical relations within/between the communities. Recognizing Segal's comprehensive discussion on the issue of Jewish ceremonial law within the early Christian communities and his contextual approach to Paul's practice toward the ceremonial law, I intend to deal with Paul's practice by relating the problem of Jew-Gentile difference within early Christian communities to the issue of social hierarchical relations. This means an attempt to focus on the concrete contexts before and after the Jerusalem conference and the Antioch incident, the relationship between the Jerusalem church and the Antioch church, and differences in Jew-Gentile relations between the community at Antioch and the community in Rome.

(d) Elizabeth A. Castelli

Elizabeth A. Castelli's book *Imitating Paul: A Discourse of Power*[47] is a critical engagement with Paul's discourse of mimesis from the postmodern perspective on the problematic of sameness (identity) and difference. Although Castelli's book does not deal with my question concerning equality and difference between Jews and Gentiles, her work deserves a special recognition in relation to the theoretical framework she has introduced to Pauline studies. As shall be discussed in the following chapter, the theoretical and hermeneutical considerations of my study have some resonance with Castelli's critique of "the economy of sameness" as "the construction of the foil of the other as a cultural necessity" in Western culture and the master discourses of Western Christianity.[48] Castelli's study of Paul's discourse of mimesis can be considered as a significant work which initiated the project of critical appropriation of postmodern discourses into the arena of Pauline studies. Within a similar cultural critical framework, Daniel Boyarin brought his own "Jewish" question for his interpretive critique of Paul's universalism in the general contour of Pauline discourses. My use of postmodern language and notions such as "discourse," "social formation," and "identity/difference" in this study is in part indebted to Castelli's contribution.[49]

46. Ibid., 214.
47. Castelli, *Imitating Paul*.
48. Ibid., 41.
49. For the definitions of such terms, see ibid., 51–56. As shall be discussed below,

Stressing that Paul occupies an "important place in the master narratives of Western culture," Castelli interrogates how Paul's discourse of mimesis as "the drive toward sameness" contributes to the construction of the "the hegemony of identity" in Western culture.[50] Given her focus on the problem of sameness and difference, Castelli understandably takes up Paul's discourse of imitation, because imitation on the linguistic level stands on the side of sameness and identity. On this point, Castelli writes: "Mimesis presupposes a valorization of sameness over against difference. Certain conceptual equations accompany this move: unity and harmony are associated with sameness while difference is attributed characteristics of diffusion, disorder, and discord."[51]

Further, Castelli emphasizes the social implications articulated in the mimetic relationship in terms of a hierarchical relationship, the privileged status of a person or a model, and the role of authority. Thus, Castelli's interpretive goal is to investigate how Paul's rhetoric of mimesis ideologically functions as a discourse of power and as such establishes a certain set of hierarchical social relations in early Christian social formation. This enables Castelli to deploy particularly Michel Foucault's theoretical notions and discourses on "power" and "truth/claim to truth."

In her reading of Paul's discourse of mimesis Castelli emphasizes Paul's "privileged position" as "the one who speaks" and the role of his authority within early Christian communities. Paul's discourse on mimesis, according to Castelli, "constructs the early communities within a hierarchical economy of sameness which both appropriates the members of the early communities and reinscribes Paul's privileged position as natural."[52] Consequently, Castelli's reading of Paul's discourse of mimesis concludes that it is "a demand for the erasure of difference,"[53] which has contributed to "the broader Western enactment of sameness and resistance to difference."[54]

While appreciating Castelli's theoretical frameworks and interpretive agendas in her critique of the economy of sameness, my approach to identity/difference will show some differences in the interpretive agenda,

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my appropriation of postmodern critique of "the logic of identity" and the meaning of "difference" draws on Young's work, *Justice and the Politics of Difference*.

50. Castelli, *Imitating Paul*, 17.

51. Ibid., 16.

52. Ibid., 117.

53. Ibid., 124.

54. Ibid., 127.

emphasis, and strategy, and therefore a different reading of Paul's politics of difference. First, although I also consider hierarchical relations an important interpretive lens in my reading of Paul's discourse, I put more emphasis on hierarchical relations between Jews and Gentiles within Paul's communities, rather than on Paul's privileged position toward his communities. Second, although I acknowledge the significance of the social and reading effects of Christian discourses such as Paul's discourse, I do not see why textual effects must be separated from the issue of "intentionality" of texts (authors), so far as "the claim to truth" is perceived as "intentional," not "self-evident" (as Castelli argues).[55] Further, I claim that "the gap between intent and effect" invites readers to discern its historical and ideological complicities, rather than rendering the author's intention irrelevant. What is more important for my concern is to frame the question in terms of "reading effects for whom?" Third, in approaching the problem of sameness and difference, my study is more concerned with the relations of "equality" to "sameness" and "difference." I do not think that the notions of equality and unity are identical with "sameness," thus categorically repressing difference. These questions and related issues shall be discussed in the following chapter of this study.

(e) Daniel Boyarin

A Radical Jew: Paul and the Politics of Identity is the product of Daniel Boyarin's own wrestling with Pauline (Christian) universalism from the cultural critical perspective of a contemporary Jew. Boyarin's reading of Paul is a radical challenge to Western Christian universalism which has been "a powerful force for coercive discourses of sameness, denying the rights of Jews, women, and others to retain their differences."[56] Bringing the specific question of Jewish difference and other differences, Boyarin situates his work within the intellectual climate of the contemporary critical and cultural studies. What motivates his work is the cultural critical stance he takes against the Christian universalism "which deprives those who have historically grounded identities in those material signifiers of the power to speak for themselves and remain different."[57] He asks the same question that I brought to this study and with which I am struggling, that

55. For Castelli's position on these issues, see ibid., 119–21.

56. Boyarin, *A Radical Jew*, 233.

57. Ibid., 220.

is, "Are the specificities of human identity, the differences, of value, or are they only an obstacle in the striving for justice and liberation?"[58] However, Paul's politics of difference that my work aims to offer as an answer to the question shall be strikingly different from Paul's universalism as Boyarin sees and rejects it as flawed.

From the outset, Boyarin starts with his basic assumption that "Paul was motivated by a Hellenistic desire for the One, which among other things produced an ideal of a universal human essence, beyond difference and hierarchy."[59] Paul's passionate concern for the oneness of humanity was accomplished, according to Boyarin, by the interpretive means of "the radically dualist and allegorical hermeneutic" Paul developed. Throughout his book, Boyarin persistently argues that Paul's universalism of "neither Jew nor Gentile" is meant to be the erasure of not only Jew-Gentile difference but also all human cultural specificities. Despite the significance of the cultural critical hermeneutics Boyarin brings to the Pauline discourse, his reading of Paul far too much equates Paul's universalism with Western Christian imperialist universalism, or at least the post-Pauline development. The significant historical change of time and power is not taken into full consideration.

Boyarin's presuppositions that Paul's universalism was motivated by a Hellenistic ideal of a universal human being beyond difference and hierarchy and that Paul sought to eradicate all human cultural particularities and differences, particularly Jewish difference, are problematic. Although Boyarin regards Paul's discourse as an inner-Jewish cultural discourse, he fails to apply this convincingly to the actual reading of Paul's text and context. "Jewish difference" is mostly discussed as Jewish self-identity within the framework of later Jewish-Christian relations, not that of Jew-Gentile relations at the time of Paul.

It should be acknowledged that the early Christian groups represented in Paul's discourse did not yet form a religious entity separate from Judaism, nor did they obtain any social and political power as to define or devalue the Jewish cultural and ethnic practices as "difference," although such a nascent tendency could become visible within certain groups as reflected in Romans. Who defines "difference" as "otherness" to be excluded and who claims "difference" as "self-identity" becomes crucial for the contextual and

58. Ibid., 3.

59. Ibid., 7.

relational understanding of the meaning of "difference" in antiquity and our postmodern society as well.

Since here I problematize Boyarin's definition of the term "Jewish difference" and its applicability to Paul and his communities, I feel compelled to make definitional and conceptual clarifications on terms I use in my work, such as "Christian," "Christians," Jewish Christian," and "Gentile Christian." Although the proper use of the terms "Jewish Christians" and "Gentile Christians" has been disputed,[60] the use of the adjective "Christian" and "Christians" is generally taken for granted among New Testament scholarship. As I pointed out, if the early Jewish messianic and apocalyptic groups in Palestine and the Diaspora with which Paul and other Jews and Gentiles associated did not yet belong to a religious entity separate from Judaism, i.e., what has become "Christianity" in later time, the question here is whether the use of the term "Christian" in referring to such groups and the members is appropriate.

Further, the ambiguity and difficulty involved in the use of the term "Christian" becomes more complicated when we need to characterize the nature of such communities within the larger framework of Jewish communities. In other words, to what extent did Pauline communities or the early Jewish sectarian communities which had a belief in Jesus Christ as the Jewish messiah associate themselves with the surrounding Jewish synagogue or household communities and at the same time dissociate themselves from those larger Jewish groups? Despite its importance, the historical complexity and the paucity of historical evidence related to this question does not allow us any clear answer.

Given that during the pre-70 CE period no follower of Jesus, including Paul, identified him/herself as a "Christian" in the sense of what we call later "Christianity" separate from Rabbinic Judaism, I concede that my use of "Christian" is definitely anachronistic.[61] However, despite a considerable—though unidentifiable—degree of affinity between Pauline communities and Jewish synagogue communities in the Diaspora, whenever there is need to differentiate the former from the latter I use the term "Christian" to refer to the Pauline communities, such as early "Christian" communities or Pauline "Christian" communities. Even in that case, my

60. For example, see Malina, "Jewish Christianity or Christian Judaism," 46–56; Nanos, *The Mystery of Romans*, 21 n. 1.

61. In Acts 11:26 the author of Luke-Acts retrospectively, about thirty years after, refers to the members of the Antiochene community as "Christians" (οἱ Χριστιανοί), and the term nowhere occurs in Paul who exclusively talks about Jews and Gentiles.

use of the term "Christian" precludes any implication of the later phenomenon of a complete break between the Christian ἐκκλησία and the Jewish συναγωγή. Rather, my emphasis is on the "associative" and "analytical" use of the term "Christian." This refers to the community's association with "Christ" in differentiation from other communities on the one hand, and to Jews and Gentiles within the community in differentiation from other Jews and Gentiles outside the community on the other hand. A flexible use of the term "Christian" articulated in this way will be pertinent to the use of other terms such as "inter-Jewish," "intra-Jewish," "inner-Christian," and "intramural."[62]

Regarding the conventional use of "Jewish Christians" and "Gentile Christians," some scholars prefer the terms "Christian Jews" and "Christian Gentiles," emphasizing that at least before 70 CE Christianity was not a separate religion from Judaism. In that case, the term "Jewish Christians" is perceived as bi-religious rather than ethnico-religious. However, I do not think that a bi-religious meaning fits the term "Gentile Christians." I believe that, given the early pre-70 CE period of historical ambiguity and uncertainty, "Jewish Christians" and "Christian Jews" are interchangeable in application. Considering the intramural character of Jewish-Gentile relations within Pauline communities, I prefer to use "*Jewish* Christians" and "*Gentile* Christians" as ethnico-religious terms—not too rigidly, though.[63]

62. For the use of these terminologies by other scholars, see chapter 4 n. 1 below.

63. After my dissertation was completed, some scholars have taken issue with the translation of Ἰουδαῖος and Ἰουδαῖοι as "Jew" and "Jews" with regard to historical, theological, and ethical problems: e.g., see Esler, *Conflict and Identity in Romans*, esp. 62–76; Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness*, esp. 69–139; and J. H. Elliott, "Jesus the Israelite," 119–54. While Cohen argues for the relevance of the use of Jew/Jewish for Ἰουδαῖος after 100 BCE with its shifting religious meaning, Esler and Elliott have made persuasive arguments that the term Ἰουδαῖοι used in the time of New Testament should be translated as "Judeans," not "Jews." Further, Elliott has made a compelling case that "Israelite" "(Ἰσραηλίτης)" is the inside term preferred as their self-identification by the people of Israel, including Jesus and Paul, while Ἰουδαῖος ("Judean") is the term with which the outsiders referred to those who were affiliated with the land of Judea, Jerusalem, and temple.

Although I made explicit the anachronistic problem of the use of the term "Christian" in studying the New Testament texts, I have not dealt with the similar problem embedded in the use of terms "Jew" and "Jewish." While in this work I have stressed the ethnico-religious and social differences within different Christ groups in the Diaspora and opposed essentialist approaches to Jew(Judean)-Gentile relations, I concede that I am following the conventional terminology of "Jew" and "Jewish," but not the traditional interpretations.

2.2. Equality with Difference

(a) Peter J. Tomson

Peter J. Tomson[64] aims to trace and argue for the pervasiveness of halakha in Paul's letters and thought. He acutely observes that "the abandonment of the traditional Protestant view of justification as the heart of Paul has resulted in the re-adoption of the Patristic hypothesis that Paul's main concern is the practical annulment of the Jewish law."[65] Tomson attempts to challenge such a position and argue that the Jewish Law at the practical levels remained valid for Paul as well as other Jewish Christians.

According to Tomson, Paul should not be understood as the one who separated Christianity from Judaism by eradicating the practical, halakhic distinction between Jews and Gentiles. Rather, it is argued that Paul remained a practicing Jew even after he was converted to the Christian movement. On the other hand, Tomson continues to argue that Paul's consistent position was that those Gentiles who joined the new Jewish sectarian movement did not have to become Jewish proselytes by receiving circumcision. Tomson grounds his argument for Paul's pluralism on his interpretation of 1 Cor 7:17–24.

As for the issue of table-fellowship in Galatians and Romans, Tomson takes a different position from the dominant one in Pauline scholarship which underlines the discrepancy in Paul's attitude toward Jewish Law. Tomson argues that Paul pleads for pluralism for the sake of the unity of each church without asking Jews to abandon the observance of the Jewish laws. With careful attention to different situations reflected in Galatians and Romans, Tomson elucidates how Paul tries to maintain the goal of co-existence of Jews and Gentiles through his "pluralist"—not inconsistent—position toward Jewish law in each community, arguing that in Galatians, including the Antioch incident, Paul urged tolerance toward Gentiles, whereas in Romans toward "delicate" Jews.[66] The theme of "unity" stands out in Tomson's interpretation of Paul's "pluralist position" as in Sanders and Segal, but he comes to a different conclusion.

However, some points need to be made for further study of the issue. (1) Tomson does not seem to give any explicit explanation for the thrust of co-existence of Jews and Gentiles apart from the unity of church

64. Tomson, *Paul and the Jewish Law*.

65. Ibid., 237.

66. Ibid., 222–29, 236–44.

or pluralism which allows different lifestyles for both Jews and Gentiles. (2) Consequently, it is not surprising to see that Tomson attributes to Paul a pluralism in its very "neutral rationale,"[67] that is, lacking a specific perspective, although Tomson admits that Paul's pluralism does not mean "indifference" to the Jewish law. That is why Tomson explains the rationale underlying Paul's position in dealing with the difference between Jews and Gentiles at table-fellowship in terms of popular ethos of pluralism at Paul's time represented by Cynico-Stoic and later Rabbinic traditions.[68] (3) Hence, Tomson's discussion on the meaning of "difference" is fundamentally based on the halakhic difference between Jews and Gentiles and the conclusion he draws is, as Tomson himself admits, a re-adoption of the so-called Paul's *status quo* theory, meaning that "as long as we stay in the flesh the Law remains in force."[69]

(b) Mark D. Nanos:

Mark D. Nanos's *The Mystery of Romans* is one of the most provocative works among recent studies of Paul's letter to the Romans.[70] His reading of Romans is an attempt to challenge the traditional Lutheran interpretation of Paul and its lingering legacies in the contemporary Pauline scholarship. Nanos's reading of Paul, his message and intentions in Romans, strikingly differs from that of the majority of the Pauline scholars. One of the main points in his argument is that for Paul, gospel means "a Law-observant one for Jews and a Law-respectful one for gentiles."[71]

In defense of a very Jewish Paul, Nanos presupposes the thoroughly Jewish context of Paul and his mission to Gentiles and the formation of early Christian communities. The Jewish context that Nanos explores for his reading of Paul is rather circumscribed to some general aspects of the historical context of Jews and Jewish communities in Diaspora. Nanos emphasizes, among others, the role of the synagogue in the Jewish community, the presence of "God-fearing" Gentiles and their relations to the halakha

67. Ibid., 250.

68. Ibid., 245–54.

69. Ibid., 237. For a different reading of 1 Cor 7:17–20, see Segal, *Paul the Convert*, 214–15.

70. Nanos, *The Mystery of Romans*.

71. Ibid., 23 and *passim*.

operative in the category of "righteous Gentiles."[72] Nanos applies the full implications of these factors to his reading of Paul's message in Romans by relating them to the implied audience (Christian Gentiles), the tension between the "weak" and the "strong," and the issue of equality and difference between Jews and Gentiles.

One of the most provocative arguments Nanos makes is that he identifies the "weak" in Romans with non-Christian Jews rather than Jewish Christians and the "strong" as Gentile Christians.[73] According to Nanos, the traditional identification of the "weak" in Romans with the Jewish Christians is problematic, because in that case scholars are passing judgment on the continuous practice of Jewish laws on the part of Jewish Christians as if it were "deficient in faith."[74] Nanos sees such judgment as the very judgment Paul opposed to in Rom 14:3.[75] Although Nanos's identification of the "weak" with non-Christian Jews as a solution for such a dilemma appears to be appealing, it reveals some ambiguity and weakness. For example, if we follow Nanos's proposal regarding the identity of the "weak" and the "strong," we need to imagine a Christian group in Rome which had much undifferentiated association with non-Christian Jews, Christian Jews, non-Christian Gentile God-fearers, and Christian "righteous Gentiles" within the larger Jewish community. Moreover, it is hard to understand how Christian Gentiles—they must have been in a minority position within the Jewish community, albeit in a majority position over Jewish Christians—could be tempted to disregard and despise non-Christian Jews and the rules of behavior which righteous Gentiles were expected to observe. In my view, the identity of the weak and the strong as Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians in Rome can still work for the same argument that Nanos makes.

Throughout his reading of Romans and Galatians as well, Nanos discusses the relationship between Jews and Gentiles and Paul's position toward them by considering the principle of universal "monotheism" (that is, the One God of Israel is also the One God of the nations) as integral to Paul's conviction and arguments.[76] According to Nanos, on the basis of such "monotheism" Paul insisted that (1) Jews should not become like

72. See ibid., 41–84.

73. See ibid., 85–165 (Chapter 3: "Who were the 'Weak' and the 'Strong' in Rome?"), esp. 119–59.

74. Ibid., 88–95.

75. Ibid., 103–19.

76. Ibid., esp. 179–201.

Gentiles, by giving up the very practices that make them Jews, and that (2) Gentiles should not become Jews by adopting circumcision, but respect the minimal requirements expected of "righteous gentiles." This is how Nanos explores the meaning of Paul's understanding of the equality between Jews and Gentiles in Christ in terms of an "equal, but different" principle: "They are different, *Jews* and Gentiles—yet *equal* in Christ."[77] Nanos endeavors to demonstrate that such "monotheism" promoted the "equal, but different" principle without devaluing the meaningful validity of the Jewish law and customs on the part of Jews and Jewish Christians, and that this very monotheism was equally operating for Paul's position in his confrontation with Peter at Antioch (Gal 2:11–21).

Nanos's exegesis of the Antioch incident, however, turns out to be somewhat problematic. Although I accept Nanos's challenge to the dominant scholarly view that Paul's concern for equality between Jews and Gentiles was motivated by and/or resulted in the abrogation of differences among them, his discussion of the issue remains too theological, heavily drawing on the theme of "monotheism." The study of Paul and his politics of equality/difference needs a further consideration of the concrete historical context of each local community within a broader Roman imperial context in which Jewish and Pauline communities were situated.

3. THEORETICAL AND HERMENEUTICAL CONSIDERATIONS AND READING STRATEGY OF THIS STUDY

In the preceding section, I have sketched briefly two contrasting interpretive trends in current interpretation of Paul with regard to the issue of equality/difference between Jews and Gentiles. Both trends commonly acknowledge that Paul's attitude toward Jewish Law has much to do with the issue of equal status of Jews and Gentiles within the Christian community, rather than with the critique of Jewish legalism. But, does equality or justice necessarily mean the denial or limitation of Jewish and Gentile difference?

According to the first position, Paul's devaluation of the validity of the Jewish Law in theory and/or in practice was motivated by and/or resulted in the eradication of differences between Jews and Gentiles. Scholars who belong to this category sought to explain Paul's position under the rubric

77. Ibid., 286 (emphasis original).

of "universalism," although they use different terms with slightly different emphases. A fundamental problem with this position is the nature of universalism it imposes on Paul. No doubt, the ideal of universalism and social unity that transcends differences and thereby reproduces cultural imperialist relations of domination and oppression should be challenged and dismantled. But, does Paul in Galatians and Romans promote such a universalism?

On the other hand, the second position contends that Paul, like his other Jewish fellows, remained a Torah-observant Jew. Not only did he not urge Jews to abandon their practice of the Jewish Laws, but further encouraged Gentiles to accommodate to the Jewish laws. Thus, the co-existence of Jews and Gentiles which Paul advocated is characterized by the principle of "pluralism" in the sense that Jews remain Jews and Gentiles remain Gentiles. Who would have opposed such a neutral pluralism, if that was Paul's position? The argument for such a neutral pluralism seems to undermine both historical and ideological complexity involved in the issue in question.

In order to search for equality and difference between Jews and Gentiles, I will make connections with the contemporary theoretical and hermeneutical context of Paul's day in which the discourse on equality and difference had become an emerging issue, and by making explicit my social location from which I engage the contemporary politics of difference as well as the Pauline discourse on equality and difference. Secondly, I contextualize the Pauline discourse on equality and difference between Jews and Gentiles by situating it into a proper *Sitz im Leben*, that is, the setting of table-fellowship within Pauline Christian communities (Gal 2:11–21 and Rom 14:1—15:13). Furthermore, I shall recontextualize the practice of table-fellowship at early Christian meals within the larger cultural milieu of Greco-Roman meal practice.

The way of posing questions regarding the issue of equality and difference between Jews and Gentiles, the scholarly interpretation of Paul's universalism, and its implications have some resonance with the contemporary critical discourse on the politics of identity/difference. Thus, in chapter 2 of this study, I shall attempt a dialogical and critical engagement with the current social criticisms on the politics of difference, particularly taking into consideration postmodern, feminist, and postcolonial perspectives on "difference." Furthermore, such an engagement will be made by bringing a distinct perspective from my own Korean context, that is, a liberation-oriented *minjung* perspective in order to see how different approaches to

the politics of difference intersect with the similarities and dissimilarities of one another.

In particular, in order to problematize dualistic, binary terms and conceptions, including the very terms "Jews and Gentiles" in Pauline discourse and Pauline scholarship, I will pay attention to the postmodern criticism of Western philosophical and theoretical discourse on "the logic of identity"[78] which serves to deny and repress difference. On the other hand, my approach to the problem of equality and difference is to a certain extent motivated by and has affinity with the recent issue of "competing paradigms of liberation."[79] The ideal of liberation as the elimination of group difference has been recently challenged by social movements of the oppressed. The politics of difference which asserts group difference has been promoted by these social movements. What is at stake here is the meaning of social "difference" within the context of equality/justice. The focus on the meaning of social and political "difference" will be further discussed in my reappropriation of feminist and postcolonial perspectives on "difference." The primary meaning of "difference" as denied, marginalized, and alienated identity within hierarchical power relations in terms of class, gender, race, and empire will be explored and appropriated.

Scholars, following Stendahl's argument, have acknowledged that the thrust of Paul's justification by faith was not Luther's quest for a gracious God, but Paul's concern for the equal status of Gentile Christians. Yet, it has not been sufficiently explored how the issue of equality and difference between Jews and Gentiles in Paul and the early Christian movement is closely linked to the specific setting of "table-fellowship" of Jews and Gentiles, as it is shown from different perspectives, e.g., in Galatians (Gal 2:11–14), Romans (Rom 14:1—15:13) and Acts (Acts 10, 11, 15).[80] Preparing for my exegetical and interpretive reading of two meal texts in Gal 2:1–21 and Rom 14:1—15:13 in chapters 4 and 5, I shall discuss in chapter

78. For an excellent theoretical elaboration of the post-modern discourse on identity/difference within the framework of social justice, see Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference*. For "the logic of identity," see esp. 96–121.

79. Ibid., esp. 156–73.

80. Considering that the problems involved in the Corinthian meal settings are not directly related to the issue of Jew-Gentile equality and difference, I will not deal with the Corinthian situation throughout this study. For the Corinthian problems, see Theissen, "The Strong and the Week"; Theissen, "Social Integration"; Gooch, *Dangerous Food*; Horsley, "1 Corinthians." For imperial context, see esp. Price, *Rituals and Power*.

3 the significance of Greco-Roman meal practice as an important setting for table-fellowship in early Christian communities.

Greco-Roman common meals as a social institution provided the cultural milieu for social and religious activities of various groups, clubs, and associations in the first-century Roman world, including Jewish and early Christian gatherings. The practice of table-fellowship represents an important context in which members of early Christian communities embodied their faith in concrete, communal, and interactive ways within their specific historical situations. It was a communal space where especially the ideal of equality between Jews and Gentiles could be tested in the face of mutual difference. I will affirm this emphasis by examining how differences in social status, class, and gender were structurally arranged and displayed at Greco-Roman meals and how the tension between social equality and social difference was dealt with at rhetorical and practical levels in relation to common meals. Furthermore, in order to explore diverse ways of dealing with and negotiating those social differences at meals, including Paul's position toward the differences between Jews and Gentiles at common meals, I shall discuss how the logic and dynamic of Greco-Roman meals intersects with the logic and dynamics of ritual in general.

Recognizing that the early Christian meal practice was a primary *Sitz im Leben* in which Jew-Gentile difference was problematized, debated, and negotiated within the process of early Christian social formation, in chapters 4 and 5 I will focus my exegetical and interpretive work on the two texts (Gal 2:11–21 and Rom 14:1—15:13) which allow us a glimpse of the early Christian table-fellowship trouble with the Jew-Gentile difference at different communities of different social hierarchical relations. Along with the theoretical and hermeneutical perspectives I bring to the familiar texts, a socio-historical and socio-rhetorical reading will be guiding my reading and interpretation of Paul's dealing with the differences between Jews and Gentiles.

One of the main arguments in this study is that by dealing with the contextual meanings of contingent differences between Jews and Gentiles within the particularities of different communities and by negotiating those differences within the framework of equality-versus-difference, Paul actually presents a coherent politics of difference, which is embodied in both his practices and theological argumentations. I would contend that Paul's practices related to the issue of the Jew-Gentile difference at the early Christian community meals exemplify such a politics of difference.

Furthermore, I will argue that while Paul's practice acted out at the Antioch incident (Gal 2:11–21) represents his concern for and defense of the Gentile difference, Paul's rhetorical practice in negotiating the Jew-Gentile difference between the "weak" and the "strong" at Christian meal practice in Rome (Rom 14:1—15:13) represents his concern for and defense of the Jewish difference.

Would it be possible to suggest that Paul might have an emancipatory and egalitarian understanding of "universalism" and "unity" when he wrestled with the vision of community of "neither Jews nor Gentiles" (cf. Gal 3:26–28)? Then, the question will become crucial: "universalism or pluralism—from whose perspective?" With this question in mind, this study aims to offer an alternative reading of "neither Jews nor Gentiles" in Paul's politics of difference and its implication.