"Strangers" in the New Testament and Contemporary International Migrant Workers

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Abstract

Viewed sociologically, the origin of the earliest Christianity may be explained in terms of a process in which minjung(people) in the first century envisioned and experimented a new hope in the face of the Roman imperial globalization. This study examines the dynamic features of early Christianity as a movement of alternative community(s) and changes that it sought to make, against the massive wave of globalization that the Roman Empire brought to disrupt and destroy the traditional communities in villages and cities. Then, this study endeavors to consider how the early churches which defined themselves as strangers in the world embraced the weak and strangers into their communities. In conclusion, this study tries to make a brief reflection on the ethical implications that such originary experiences of the early

church might bear on today's situation of global diasporas of foreign migrant workers.

1. Introduction

It has been pointed out that in the last two decades Korean society is becoming, so to speak, a multicultural society, especially given that the number of international migrant workers, married migrant women, and people escaping from North Korea has significantly increased. According to a report by the Korean Department of Justice, at the end of 2017 the number of foreign residents in Korea, including illegal residents, reached 2,180,498, which amounts to 4.21% of the entire population. This is an indication of 8.5% annual average increase between 2012 and 2017.[1] With a decreasing birth rate, increasing number of aging people, and labor shortage in the fields of 3D,[2] current Korean society is facing a pressing issue of labor power shortage. It seems likely that the Korean society would need to integrate more international migrant workers than before.[3] In general, a society that has foreign residents more than 10% of its entire population can be categorized as an immigrant society. Thus, scholars estimate that if the current tendency continues, that is, if the number of foreigners continues to grow, the Korean society will enter a new phase of transition into an immigrant society approximately by the year of 2050.[4]

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1 Korea Immigration Service Statistics 2017. According to this report, the number of immigrants through marriage has also increased up to the annual average ratio of 28% from 2002 to 2014, when the government has eventually applied strict regulations to issuing visas.

2 3D(Difficult, Dangerous, Dirty) industries refer to business types that require hard physical labor.

3 The UN Report 2001 has suggested that South Korea recruit 1.5 million workers from foreign migrant workers in 2030-2050 in order to maintain the current economic status. In Jin Yoon, "The Development and Characteristics of Korean Multiculturalism: With Focus on the Relationship between Nation State and Civil Society," *Korean Sociology* 42/2 (2008): 74.

4 Jong Ho Song, "Out of the Illusion of Unitary Minjok: Toward Transition to Multiculturalism,"

These kinds of statistics reveals a bare face of what contemporary neoliberal globalization embodies in reality. Issues involving international migrant workers and married migrant women are the products of the dominant socio-economic system in the world today. In this essay I approach the issue of international migrant workers against our global context in which many people, whether in their own countries or in foreign countries, are experiencing lives deprived of autonomy and subsistence. By considering the issue of international migrant workers as one of the issues involving socio-economic inequality, which is inevitably accompanied and intensified by the globalization of neoliberalism, I intend to reflect on some ethical questions related to the issue of international migrant workers from a biblical and theological perspective.

Just as contemporary globalization has destroyed the self-sufficient and subsistent lives of many people (minjung) and made it difficult for them to live in their own countries, what we may call "the globalization of the Roman Empire" destroyed the lives of many self-sufficient peasants in first-century Palestine. Viewed sociologically, the origin of the earliest Christianity may be explained in terms of a process in which minjung in the first century envisioned and experimented a new hope in the face of the Roman imperial globalization. With this general understanding in mind, I will look at the dynamic features of early Christianity as a movement of alternative community(s) against the massive wave of globalization that the Roman Empire brought to disrupt and destroy the traditional communities in villages and cities. Then, I will consider how the early churches which defined themselves as strangers in the world embraced the weak and

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strangers into their communities, arguing that both the early Christian self-understanding of existence as strangers in the world and its call for fraternity and hospitality toward strangers constituted one of the core aspects of the early Christianity.

2. Uprooted Life and International Migrant Workers

To begin with, the story of Jacob in the Old Testament is noteworthy. As one of the forebears of Israel Jacob lived a tough and harsh journey of life. In the book of Genesis, Pharaoh the Egyptian king asks Jacob about his age and Jacob replies: "The days of the years of my sojourning are a hundred and thirty years; few and evil have been the days of the years of my life, and they have not attained to the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their sojourning" (Gen. 47:8-9). We can take Jacob's reply before Pharaoh as describing the lives of the prominent figures in the Old Testament, from Abraham, Issac, and Moses, to the people of the Exile in Babylon. What would have been their real life experience? They would have left behind their families and kinsfolks and faced unprotected real-life of sojourning. The terms such as "sojourners" or "wanderers" seem to express aptly the real-life experience of those people.[5]

The life of wandering was rather a common phenomenon among the earliest human ancestors, including the ancient people of Israel. On the one hand, migrating (wandering) would be a subjective choice for a new possibility of life. On the other hand, it might be a forced

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5 Deuternomy 26:5-11, which constitutes the core of the Pentateuch traditions, says that "A wandering Aramean was my father…. (26:5).

fate of displacement from ancestral lands, homes, families, and relatives. In most societies, migration generally, with few exceptions, happens less as a voluntary choice than as a consequence of uprooted life. Particularly, in our contemporary society since the rise of modern nation state and the development of capitalism, only a group of the elite are able to make their own voluntary choices for migrant life. On the contrary, the reality is that more refugees are being scattered over the world, so living in the diaspora is being spread over the world.

What is important to note is that the world-wide scale and intensity of contemporary globalization has contributed to the massive destruction of the self-reliant and self-subsistent lives of the majority of people (minjung) and consequently to the global expansion of displaced and uprooted life. The system of neoliberal capitalism has reorganized and aligned the globe, for the goal of maximizing the capital profits, into a space for profits, namely, a single global market. Scholars have asserted that today's globalization of neoliberal capitalism is the main structural cause for the phenomenon of international migration and particularly the massive flux of foreign migrant workers.[6] This has led to the situation that each year during the last two decades more than 10 million people have left their home countries for new work places. According to the report presented in 2015 by International Organization for Migration, the number of international migrants, including migrant workers, has reached around 200 million, which amounts 3% of the whole global population.[7] While neoliberal globalization has

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6 Holger Heide and Soo Dol Kang, "Autonomy and Identity of Migrant Workers," in *Beyond Capitalism, Beyond Labor* (Seoul: Ihu, 2009), 234.

7 IOM(International Organization for Migration) Report 2015, 17. There are estimated 232 million international migrants (UN DESA, 2013) and 740 million international migrants (UNDP, 2009) in the world.

devastating effects on the indigenous and self-subsistent lives of peoples rooted in their own lands, it has also proliferated consumeristic lifestyle centered on the market as the only viable lifestyle on the globe. Consequently, many people (minjung) of many nations have been compelled to give up their traditional self-subsistent ways of life and many live as international migrant workers, either by choice or by compulsion.[8] The more the inhumane and life-threatening process of neoliberal structural adjustment accelerates, the more international migrant workers suffer from being uprooted out of their own places and deprived of chances to live basic human lives. This will lead each nation state to strengthen its control mechanisms against migrant workers, which will further devastate the every-day life of the majority of international migrant workers.

Within the system of the global capital flow, each nation state exists basically to serve the interests of capital. Historically, modern nation states arose simultaneously with the formation of capitalism and modern nation states today function mainly to facilitate unlimited self-expansion of capital. Within the global system of neoliberalism, nation states help free transfer of capital and its products across and beyond national boundaries, while tightly controlling the migration of labor force, particularly that of simple labor. The reason for this is that neoliberal globalization greatly depends on the profits stemming from differences in labor wages among nations. Such differentiation derived from the uneven economic development among various nations is fundamental to maximizing profits by transnational capital. Inasmuch

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8 IOM Report 2015 indicates that the phenomenon of international migration has eventuated the phenomenon of world-wide over-urbanization, which has caused serious environmental problems.

as capitalism operates by utilizing relative deprivation as a psychological mechanism to stimulate endless desire for material wealth, global capitalism today works on the ground of the uneven economic development among nations.

Accordingly, in order to expand profits, transnational capital seeks to secure its free transfer across international boundaries and at the same time exercise strong control on the international migration of the labor force. At one level, globalization has provided an open, transnational space for capital and its products. At another level, it has built walls of discrimination over national borders, thus prohibiting free mobility of human beings, especially the simple labor force. While the abstract universality of money can traverse all over the world, the human labor force is not allowed to do so. Further in the case of international migrant workers, they are not treated as equal to domestic workers. Such inequality has actually affected the increase of illegal migrant workers, who then have become the target of exploitation at the lowest level of small capital. The Korean government through its policy of multiculturalism tends to pay respect to the cultural identities of foreign migrant workers and married migrant women, while remaining blind to the structural violence generating actual discrimination. This is because our national wealth and economic development relies on labor conditions disadvantageous to international migrant workers. In other words, it depends on the existing fundamental inequality.

Therefore, we cannot deal meaningfully with the issue of international migrant workers without taking into account how their traditional and self-subsistent life-pattern has been devastated and how the structural system of socio-economic inequality works at the global level. Viewed from this perspective, it seems inappropriate to define

the present Korean society as a "multicultural society" on the basis simply of the increased number of international migrant workers and married migrant women. Because it attends only to the external phenomena, but not to the causal issues involved in the problems of international migrant workers. Further, the multicultural approach would reduce the issue of socio-economic discrimination to cultural differences, rendering the issue of inequality as a matter of prejudice not as a product of the capitalist system itself. Then, instead of addressing how to make a more equal society, it stresses how to change one's prejudices with respect to race, gender, class, and culture. The crux of the matter shifts from structural inequality to individual attitudes.

It is crucial to realize that international migrant workers are not merely a labor force reducible to numeric abstraction, but human beings who live concretely in their bodies, human beings embodied in family, home, friends, traditions, and culture, though now uprooted and displaced. What is the most important is to recognize them as equal human beings rather than to see them as mere victims or objects of care. The harsh life-experience of international migrant workers is mainly due to the perverted reality of our own society. And such perversion entails nothing but insatiable material desire at the individual level and vulgar capitalist goals for economic growth as the premium value of life at the social level.

3. Roman Imperial Globalization and the Jesus Movement as a Community Renewal Movement

It might be suggested that some similarities can be found between

the economic order of our global world and the globalization of first-century Roman Empire through the conquest of the Mediterranean world.[9] This does not deny incommensurable differences[10] between the two. However, when we take into account personal experiences of suffering within the context of globalization, we might notice some significant resemblances underlying these two worlds of globalization.

It seems appropriate to call "globalization" what Rome had done with almost the entire Mediterranean world. Writing about his feats, Augustus at the end of his life, enumerates a list of areas to which what he calls "he brought peace." The list invokes what we call "globalization" in political and military terms. Augustus writes, "I extended the frontiers of all the provinces of the Roman people, which had as neighbors races not to obedient to our empire."[11] The frontier line of the empire, Augustus claims, was made equivalent to that of the globe and the tax revenue for the Roman people was stabilized with partial increases. The primary purpose of the Roman imperial globalization was to exploit the conquered and colonized people by means of taxation on the one hand and to integrate their various, indigenous cultures, traditions, and life-styles into Roman law, institutions, and culture. The imperial propaganda "*pax Romana*" functioned to consolidate the Roman imperial order ideologically, along with the "em-

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9   As for the ideology of Empire prevalent in the Christian tradition and Western civilization see Hye Ran Kim, "Roots of the Empire and the Resistance of the Uprooted", *Madang* 18 (2012).

10   The most distinctive aspect lies in that while the Roman imperial globalization bears primarily a political character in terms of its military conquest, the contemporary globalization bears primarily an economic character in terms of its integration of capital.

11   C. K. Barrett, *New Testament Background: Selected Documents* (New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1994), 3.

peror cult." As an ideological and symbolic mechanism, the emperor cult served to unify the empire as a big family which was to be protected and ruled by the absolute *pater-familias* emperor.[12]

Rome seems to have advocated a benign policy of cultural pluralism, at least officially, toward its subjugated peoples, inasmuch as the empire did not try to impose its Greco-Roman culture on them. Rather, in reality Roman life-style and culture, as that of the strong, were perceived as valuable and desirable, and to which especially the elites among the subjugated were willing to assimilate. On the other hand, many indigenous people, either by choice or by compulsion, had to leave homes and migrate to other Hellenistic cities. Roman projects of building new cities and urbanization entailed a movement of massive migration of people. In that context, although Rome pretended to promote a policy of tolerance toward indigenous cultures, in actuality it was not operative, as long as the Roman socio-political domination and economic exploitation of the subjugated people were sustained. Contrarily, the Roman policy worked in the direction of monopolizing cultures so as to devalue and destroy indigenous cultures and ways of life. It might be no surprise that the majority of the subject people would have felt enraged toward their elites who were eager to assimilate and mimic the Roman imperial culture, custom, and life-style.[13]

Whereas Rome intended to symbolize its empire as an inclusive, tol-

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12 For the political significance of emperor cults see S. R. F. Price, Rituals and Power: The Roman Imperial Cult in Asia Minor (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Paul Zanker, "The Power of Images," in *Paul and Empire: Religion and Power in Roman Imperial Society*, ed. R. A. Horsley (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 1987), 72-86.

13 For the destruction of indigenous lives in Galilee see R. A. Horsley, *Archaeology, History, and Society in Galilee: The Social Context of Jesus and Rabbis* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 1996).

erant big family through promoting the imperial cults and cultural pluralism, its internal society was being disintegrated, with its local families and villages being destroyed, due particularly to exploitative taxation. Poor peasants were forced to pay heavy taxes to both the imperial ruling class and the indigenous ruling class. The establishment of the large-estates system and the import of cheap crops from other provinces demolished the subsistence of small peasants and shareholders. Further, the more war-captives were sold as slaves in slave market, the more laborers lost employment. While villages were being dissolved due to heavy taxation and resultant debts, cities were being crowded with more unemployed laborers. It is as though cities became, so to speak, a reservoir of gunpowder for the oppressed to ignite with their alienation and rage.[14]

In short, for the majority of first-century peasants, whether in home countries or not, whether in villages or cities, Roman rule and its globalization meant the disintegration of their families and villages, and the destruction of their own traditional, self-reliant ways of life. Recent scholars have suggested that the Jesus movement should be understood as a renewal movement within Jewish society against the Roman imperial context. Richard Horsley (2003), for example, argues that the Jesus movement started as a renewal movement of village communities in first-century Galilee and Judea.[15] According to Horsley, "In the confidence that the Roman imperial order stood under the judgement of God's imminent kingdom, Jesus launched a mission of

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14 W. Schubart, *Glaube und Bildung im Wandel der Zeiten* (Munich: Munchner Verlag und Graphische Kunstanstalten, 1947), 37; K. Rudolph, Gnosis: The Nature and History of Gnosticism (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1984), 288.

15 See R. A. Horsley, *Jesus and Empire: The Kingdom of God and the New World Disorder* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003).

social renewal among subject peoples….. Convinced that Roman rulers and their Herodian and high-priestly clients had been condemned by God, Jesus acted to heal the effects of empire and to summon people to rebuild their community life. In the conviction that the kingdom of God was at hand, he pressed a program of social revolution to reestablish just egalitarian and mutually supportive social-economic relations in the village communities that constituted the basic form of the people's life."[16]

4. Worldly Strangers and Communities of Fraternity and Hospitality

The early church continued to develop Jesus' renewal movement of the Kingdom of God. While Jesus launched a movement for "renewal of covenantal community" based on local village communities in Galilee and Judea,[17] the early church, including Paul, summoned those who were scattered in the imperial cities and living as homeless sojourners to the radically inclusive assemblies, that is, the household of God[18] welcoming all without class and gender discriminations. This can be confirmed by the very language that the early church adopted to describe its self-identity.

The distinctive terms in the New Testament that the early church used to refer to its existence in the world are πάροικοι and ξένοι,[19]

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16 Horsley, *Jesus and Empire*, 105.

17 Horsley, *Jesus and Empire*, 111-113.

18 About the reconstruction of the household in early Christianity from the post-colonial perspective, see Rohun Park, "Whither the Studies of Family in Early Christianity?: A Critical Review and Search for the Reconstruction of the Household from a Postcolonial Perspective", *Madang* vol. 22.

which also occur in the LXX to depict the origin of the people of Israel. Given that the Israelite people were πάροικοι in Egypt (Deut 23:8), it should not be so surprising that the same terms appear also in the New Testament, referring to the early Christian way of life or Christian groups.[20] This means more than a metaphorical significance. In the New Testament, there are several occurrences of words such as πά-ροικος, παροικέω, παροικία (πάροικος Acts 7:6, 29, Eph 2:19, 1 Pet 2:11; παροικέω Lk 24:18, Heb 11:9; παροικία Acts 13:17, 1 Pet 1:17). With the exception of the Ephesian occurrence, all references are made to describe the social situations and characters of Christian groups. On the other hand, in 3 John 5 and Mt 25:35 the word ξένος is used to refer to strangers who need care and hospitality, and in Eph 2:19 and Heb 11:13 it denotes sojourners in relation to the earthly Christian existence.[21]

Perhaps, these terms are meant to indicate the actual social status of early Christians,[22] or are used as metaphors related to the self-understanding of their existence, reflecting their self-consciousness about how they were viewed in the eyes of non-Christian outsiders and their experience of unfavorable or even hostile views or attitudes toward

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19 Korean New Revised Standard Version generally translates ξένος as "foreigner," or "sojourner," and πάροικος as "stranger." It does not seem to me that the version makes a specific distinction between these two terms. If we want to consider the sociological meaning that each term conveys, it would be proper to translate πάροικος as "resident alien" and ξένος simply as "foreigner."

20 For the meaning and usages of these terms during the Hellenistic age, see J. H. Elliott, *A Home for the Homeless: A Social-Scientific Criticism of 1 Peter: Its Situation and Strategy* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), esp. ch.1.

21 G. Stählin, "ξένος," *TDNT 5* (1967): 1-36; K.L. Schmidt and M. Schmidt, "πάροικος," *TDNT* 5 (1967): 841-853.

22 Elliott stands for this position.

strangers that they encountered from the outsiders. In either case, it can be said that the early Christians perceived themselves as earthly strangers and foreigners. This points to the fact that the early Christian experience of the world was negative. They did not feel comfortable in the world. They felt as if they were sojourners living in a strange land. Yet, they could find the same identity and destiny from the Israelite tradition in the Old Testament. In other words, although they believed that they were the beloved and chosen people of God, the life-journey of the Israelite people was ironically akin to that of sojourners, of which Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are prime examples. This would have helped the early Christians to see their existence within the context of continuing salvation history of God. Therefore, it is very likely that early Christians perceived themselves as earthly strangers and at the same time communities of earthly strangers.

Early Christians claimed that they inherited such Israelite traditions that identified the people of Israel with wandering sojourners. In the Old Testament the people of Israel were repeatedly summoned to remember the foundational story of their historical past that their ancestors once lived as sojourners (Deut 26:5), and early Christianity appropriated the historical past of Israel as a part of their history. From this perspective, just like the Israelite people who were repeatedly reminded to treat sojourners favorably (Lev 19:34; 25:35; Num 35:15; Deut 10:18-19), early Christians were also exhorted to welcome sojourners and practice hospitality (Rom 12:13; 16:2; Philm 22; 1Tim 3:2, 5:10; Titus 1:8).

Thus, according to the New Testament, the Christian self-understanding of being strangers in the world has less to do with other-worldly reward and blessing after death, but more with the Christian

ethical imperative to practice hospitality toward strangers and so-journers. Such an imperative became an ethical foundation for an alternative community grounded on fraternity and hospitality, against the Roman imperial order. Jesus recognized it as a concrete example of loving neighbors, to love gratuitously and unconditionally ξένος ("strangers" in general) as well as πάροικοι ("resident aliens").[23] In Luke 10:25-37, a Samaritan, a sort of stranger, is exemplified as the one who has become "my neighbor." In addition, in Matthew 25, Jesus affirms welcoming a "stranger" (ξένος) as an important criterion for a person to enter either into eternal punishment or into eternal life. Namely, one's final destiny depends on whether one welcomes a stranger or not.

More importantly, what is noteworthy in Matthew 25 is the rationale given to explain why the practice of welcoming strangers should be a criterion for final judgment. The rationale is that because Jesus himself was a ξένος, strangers should be treated well: "I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me" (25:43; cf. 25:35, 38, 44, 45). Matthew 25 illustrates well the relationship between Jesus and strangers in most immediate and personal terms. Here, a ξένος, identified with Jesus himself, refers to the stranger in general.[24] Thus, it is fair to say that Matthew 25 is a supreme ethical teaching about the Christian practice of radical hospitality toward strangers, to the extent that Jesus himself is identified with one of the least among the stranger

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23   This is already included in the Holy Code in Leviticus regarding how to treat strangers. (19:10, 33-34; 23:22; 25:23, 35).

24   It would be appropriate to take "one of the least" in Mt 25:40, 45 as equivalent to "a stranger" in general sense. See L. Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1992), 637-639.

and the criterion for judgment is whether or not one welcomes the least / Jesus.

In the Gospel of John, the early Christian self-understanding as strangers is expressed in relation to confessing Christ as being a stranger in the world: We are earthly strangers, because Christ himself is so.[25] In addition, 1 John 3:14 says, "We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death." Therefore, "if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him," God's love does not abide in him (1John 3:17).

Further in the Gospels, the practice of welcoming strangers plays an important role. Particularly so in the Gospel of Luke (eg., 7:36ff; 9:51ff; 10:38ff; 14:1ff). Above all, it seems that Jesus and his disciples for their mission activities depended on hospitality and support from village communities (Mk 1:29ff; 2:15ff; 14:3ff). Besides, for Paul practicing hospitality (φιλοξενία, Rom 12:13) is a way of loving brethren (Rom 12:10). In Rom 12:13 Paul exhorts hospitality toward strangers along with communal aids among the saints. This means that in Christ exclusive boundaries are to dissolve. "Hospitality" (φιλοξενία) needs to be practiced toward all, transcending any boundaries (Heb 13:2; Rom 12:13; 1Pet 4:9; Lk 14:12-14). The early church further prescribed the practice of hospitality toward strangers as one of the qualifications required for church leaders (1Tim 3:2; Titus 1:8; 1Tim 5:10).[26] Thus, hospitality (φιλοξενία) was considered as an important Christian virtue and commanded to the followers of Jesus in general (Mk 25:35ff; Rom

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25 Esp., W. Meeks, "The Man from Heaven in Johannine Sectarianism," *JBL* 91 (1972): 44-72.

26 See D. Verner, *The Household of God: The Social World of the Pastoral Epistles* (Chico: Scholars Press, 1983), 140-141.

12:13).[27]

It seems plausible that the practice of welcoming strangers operated as an important network in support of the early Christian missionary work. Gerd Theissen (1978) argues that the early Jesus movement was mainly shaped by wandering charismatic prophets on the one hand, and by village communities in support of those prophets on the other hand.[28] According to Theissen, while the wandering charismatic prophets played a prominent role in the Jesus movement, they were also dependent on the material support from village community people in the regions of Galilee and Syria. It appears that those prophets were able to subsist primarily through the practice of hospitality granted to them. This implies that the early Christian missionaries utilized Jesus' teaching about hospitality toward strangers in their mission programs and strategies (Mk 10:11ff; Lk 10:5ff). Early apostles followed the same strategies (Acts 10:6, 18, 48; 16:15, 34; 17:7; 18:2-3, 21:8-9, 16; Rom 16:23; Philm 22). We are told that often the members of an household welcomed apostles, were baptized, and became Christ believers (Acts 16:15, 33), which might have had an impact on the formation of important house-churches related to the leading figures such as Priscilla and Aquilla (Rom 16:4-5), Philemon (Philm 22), Gaius (Rom 16:23), who welcomed and assisted Paul with material support. All this suggests that as Jesus did (for example, in Capernaum: Mk 1:29ff; 3:20; 9:33 and in Bethany: Mk 11:1; Jn 11:1ff; Lk 10:38-39), the early Church continued to utilize the practice of hospitality for its mission project, and later in systematic ways.[29]

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27 However, the Pastoral Epistles relate the practice of hospitality (φιλοξενία) to qualifications required for church bishops and widows, in 1Tim 3:2; Titus 1:8; 1Tim 5:10.

28 G. Theissen, *Sociology of Early Palestinian Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress press, 1978).

Early Christians felt themselves as homeless strangers and identified themselves with wandering sojourners in the Old Testament. As the people of Israel cherished their own social memories that their ancestors were wandering sojourners and yet chosen as God's people, the early church also had confidence that believers were welcomed to the city of God by the household of God. Such confidence would have helped them overcome their felt alienation in the world. Thus, the churches became communities of strangers and at the same time the household of God (1Tim 3:14; 1Peter 4:17; Eph 2:19). In this sense, believing that the existence of Christ, or God is strange to the world strengthened their self-consciousness of being alienated and yet worldly strangers: Christ as a stranger dwelt in the world, so believers as strangers abide in the world and are strangers toward the world. This contributed to understanding the Christian love of brethren as boundless, and the practice of hospitality as integral to the ethical instructions of the early church. This means that because the church exists as strangers in the world, it ought to welcome other strangers and embrace them fully within communities. To reiterate, the early Christian practice of hospitality was a concrete example of loving brethren, loving one another with mutuality and fraternity. This functioned as a communal network to facilitate the horizontal movement of resources from below in contrast to the Roman imperial hierarchical movement of resource from above based upon its patron/client system. This laid a foundation for the early church's self-understanding as a universal, egalitarian community based on fraternity and hospitality.

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29 The practice of hospitality was developed by later churches in the institutional form of hospit(al)ia (ξενοδοχεία or ξενώνες) as shelters for strangers. See G. Stählin, "ξένος," 24-25.

5. Conclusion

In the process of building an empire, Rome expanded its frontiers covering most areas of the Mediterranean world and integrated numerous peoples from different tribes, ethnicities, and classes. Rome adopted a pluralistic policy tolerating differences in culture, class, and religion. In actuality, however, the Roman imperial system was maintained by the privileged elite domination grounded in the patron/client system, the head of which was the emperor, and sustained by its strong military power. To the eyes of those who were at the bottom of the imperial, social pyramid, life was nothing but experiences of unbearable discrimination in matters related to race, gender, and class. To their ears, cultural pluralism was simply a rhetorical metaphor to cover up inequality and discrimination.

The Jesus movement as the kingdom of God and early Christianity confronted and responded to imperial domination in various ways. For Paul, the imperial order stood against God's wisdom, as he elaborated in 1Corinthians: "…it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age…None of the rulers of this age understood this; for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory" (1Cor 2:6-8). Paul made it explicit that Jesus was executed by the Roman imperial rulers. He clearly knew the sharp contrast between the cross and the empire, and had a vision to spread the gospel of the cross over all areas of the empire, including even to the heart of the empire, creating alternative communities subversive to the logic of the Roman imperial globalization.

Galatians 3:28 is an epitome of radical inclusivity indispensable to building alternative communities that the early church envisioned and

endeavored to experiment. A specific case is the project of collection in which Paul and other believers participated to help the poor believers in Jerusalem. The collection project exemplifies that Paul used the communal network of mutual support, so as to challenge the imperial socio-economic domination based on the patron/client system.[30] Indeed, such egalitarian mutuality stood in stark contrast to the Roman policy of tolerance. Roman order never tolerated any disturbances or movements that appeared to seriously threaten its imperial rule, but terminated them violently. Within this context, the Pauline communities sought to build alternative egalitarian communities amidst of hierarchical and unequal societies through creating autonomous networks of fraternity and hospitality among worldly strangers.

Accordingly, what is important today is to confront the dissemination of inequality and disintegrated lives under the guise of multiculturalism. Rather, it is imperative for us to take seriously the footsteps of the early church and build communities like rhizomes to imagine a different world communally and cooperatively. The fact that the number of international migrant workers is increasing all over the world manifests the globalization of miserable lives among international migrant workers, not a rosy future of multiculturalism. Today, international migrant workers are primarily those who are displaced people and wandering refugees. The notion of multiculturalism often covers up the phenomenon of diaspora, and thus the sad reality of wretched refugees.

Today, the global economic exploitation of the poor minjung, both

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30 For the patron/client system and its influence on the Corinthian church, see P. Garnsey and R. Saller, "Patronal Power Relations"; J. K. Chow, "Patronage in Roman Corinth," in *Paul and Empire*, ed. R. A. Horsley (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 1987), 96-125.

domestic and international, is unprecedented in history. Globalization integrated the economies of nation/states into a global market, with the resources and labor force of poor countries of the Third World pulled into advanced capitalist countries. More people are being uprooted from their own lands and forced to live as refugees. Thus, what is the most crucial thing is to confront the very exploitative and oppressive nature of contemporary global economic system, and at the same time the ideology of economic development internalized among us. Today's globalization of refugees relies on the policies of unlimited economic development and growth on the one hand, and on the other hand the delusion that economic growth is the only alternative for life. This is the very idolatry that Jesus starkly criticized.

Reflecting on the issues of globalization and alternative ways of life in both the early Roman empire and the 21st century global empire, I cannot but help feel that history repeats itself. Although early churches endeavored to build egalitarian communities of hospitality and solidarity to actualize the vision of the kingdom of God on earth, later they eventually coopted the Roman imperial order under its eagle's wings. However, stories and social memories about such social experiments embedded in the New Testament continue to shed a light on our search for a new direction.

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