

## Article

# Scriptural Re-Interpretation and Social Identity Negotiation in the Corinthian Letters

Darlene M. Seal

New Testament Department, Denver Seminary, Littleton, CO 80120, USA; darlene.seal@denverserminary.edu

**Abstract:** This article describes the socially formative function of the Corinthian letters and the role that Paul's reinterpretation of scripture plays in shaping the Corinthians' social identity. Paul's sustained engagement with scriptural texts in 1 Cor 10:1–22 and 2 Cor 3:1–4:6 provide the focus for analysis as two different interactions with exodus and wilderness narratives in two different social situations within the same correspondence. Like others in Second Temple Judaism, Paul uses the exodus and wilderness narratives of Israel's paradigmatic rebellion to interpret a social situation, define group identity, and increase intergroup differentiation from outsiders and intragroup cohesiveness. Social Identity Theory (SIT) provides the conceptual framework for a robust interpretive model that identifies specific textual features that realize each aspect of social identity. This approach shows that in 1 Cor 10:1–22, Paul addresses the idol food issue by establishing shared experiences with the wilderness generation to interpret the Corinthians' situation as parallel with the deviant idolatrous behavior of their forebears. In 2 Cor 3:1–4:6, Paul addresses tensions with the Corinthians using the veiling language of Exod 34 to differentiate the ingroup from outgroups according to their sight or blindness, respectively, which correlate to response to his ministry.

**Keywords:** Social Identity Theory; Self-Categorization Theory; Social Identity Complexity Theory; interpretation of scripture; boundaries; Corinthian letters



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## 1. Introduction

The Corinthian letters, like all texts, are socially formative, and Paul's re-interpretation of scripture plays a major role in shaping group members' social identities in new social and cultural realities that challenge their necessary differentiation from outsiders and internal cohesion. Much of the secondary literature on Paul's interpretation of scripture uses piecemeal or source critical approaches that neglect the texts' social function that scholars have much more readily recognized in other Second Temple texts (e.g., Barclay 1996; deSilva 2018; Jokiranta 2013). This relative neglect suggests the necessity of reading Paul's letters within the hermeneutical framework of his Second Temple context, in which scriptural re-interpretation functioned as a communal strategy to address social situations that challenged Jewish/Judean identity and distinctiveness.<sup>1</sup> Within this hermeneutical framework, Paul's sustained engagement with scriptural texts in 1 Cor 10:1–22 and 2 Cor 3:1–4:6 provides two different interactions with exodus and wilderness narratives in two different social situations within the same correspondence. Like others in the Second Temple period, Paul uses these narratives of Israel's paradigmatic rebellion to interpret a social situation, define group identity, and increase both intergroup differentiation from outsiders and intragroup cohesiveness. Henri Tajfel's Social Identity Theory (SIT) and John Turner's closely related Self-Categorization Theory (SCT) thus provide the conceptual framework for this more holistic approach to these texts and their social function, and Stargel's work (Stargel 2018) begins to provide a general interpretive framework for bridging the theoretical categories of SIT with the features of scriptural texts.

Building on this foundation, this article proposes a robust interpretive model that identifies specific textual features that realize each aspect of social identity. An additional

temporal component draws on the work of Cinnirella on “possible social identities” (Cinnirella 1998) to bring together the role of scriptural re-interpretation in social identity negotiation and a group’s social memory, the communal retelling of which is both shaped by and shapes their self-perception and response to that situation. The insights of Brian Tucker (2010) into the nested identities of the Corinthians in the Greco-Roman culture and the simultaneous taking on of a group narrative provided by Israel’s sacred texts elucidate Paul’s complex identity negotiation in 1 Cor 10:1–22. Here, Paul addresses the idol food issue by establishing shared experiences with the wilderness generation to interpret the Corinthians’ situation as parallel with the deviant idolatrous behavior of their forebears and thus subject to the same judgments. In 2 Cor 3:1–4:6, Paul addresses tensions between the Corinthians and himself by using the veiling language of Exod 34 to differentiate the ingroup from outgroups according to their sight or blindness, respectively, which correlate to response to his ministry. In addition to forging a new methodological pathway for interpreting scripture as socially formative, this approach recognizes the constellation of identities in which the Corinthians are embedded: the Greco-Roman culture, the early Jesus movement’s location within Second Temple Judaism, and the concrete, ad hoc social situations that Paul addresses in the communities.

To demonstrate this, the argument proceeds in four steps. Section 2 sketches a general framework of scriptural interpretation in the Second Temple period and its social function, which is then followed by a brief overview of SIT in the following section. Sections 4 and 5 interpret 1 Cor 10:1–22 and 2 Cor 3:1–4:6, respectively, using a model that bridges the categories of SIT with textual features that realize these categories. The conclusions are presented in Section 6. The interpretive model itself is detailed in Appendix A.

## 2. Interpretation of Scripture as a Social Phenomenon

The hermeneutical underpinning for a social identity analysis is the social nature of interpretation as taking place within a particular social context and having a *social function* and thus being socially *formative*. This is especially the case for sacred texts, which have a unique social function for the communities that consider them revelatory and as providing an authoritative perspective on the divine, the world, and themselves. This is true of scripture in Second Temple Judaism, as “scriptural foundational narratives . . . provoke further retellings or re-rememberings in new settings” with the result that “identity and interpretation are interwoven” (Lieu 2004, pp. 44, 68). In this sense, the reuse and reinterpretation of scripture as part of identity negotiation in new social situations provide categories by which groups defined who they were and what distinguished them from those outside their communities. This means that the role of textual interpretation in social identity negotiation involves both intergroup and intragroup dynamics.

In one type of *intergroup* relation in which the primary group comparison is between Judeans as a whole and outsiders, scriptural (re-)interpretation could function as a means by which Second Temple Judeans responded to and interpreted social upheavals, domination by empires, and the perceived threat of foreignness, experiences that stood in tension with some scriptural texts.<sup>2</sup> Thus, when Barclay characterizes Second Temple texts using the spectra of assimilation, acculturation, and accommodation (Barclay 1996, pp. 92–101), he is describing different approaches to intergroup relations. In fact, this issue “reverberates throughout the literature of the period: the attempt to discern how far is too far. In what ways and to what extent could the Gentile nations’ contributions to language, rhetoric, philosophy, and culture be safely used? At what point is the line of holiness—the call to Israel to remain separate from the nations—breached, thus incurring the wrath of God?” (deSilva 2018, p. 44). Here, deSilva articulates the role of texts in this negotiation process by noting that Barclay’s model is useful not only for identifying the position of a text’s author but also for identifying the author’s effect on the *readers’* position on these spectra, using the text either to shift or affirm their approach to the dominant culture (deSilva 2018, p. 55). In other words, deSilva highlights the social effect of texts, especially on intergroup relations when the primary group comparison is between Judeans and non-Judeans.

In addition to these intergroup identity negotiations, another type of intergroup negotiation occurred among different subgroups within Second Temple Judaism and is evident in the correlation between interpretation of scripture and legitimation of some subgroup or sect over against others (Blenkinsopp 1981).<sup>3</sup> Unsurprisingly, this dynamic is most explicit with the Qumran sectarian texts, in which scriptural interpretation is one way in which the sect formed and articulated their self-understanding as a community whose differentiation from other groups finds legitimation in the scriptures themselves (See Schofield 2008, pp. 37–53; VanderKam 2005, pp. 44–60; Swarup 2006; Jokiranta 2013). At the same time, to the extent that they were also self-legitimizing their group for their own members' sense of ingroup identity, this identity negotiation also includes *intragroup* as well as intergroup dynamics. However, the re-interpretation of scripture as an identity-shaping exercise also characterizes Second Temple Judaism more widely than Qumran.<sup>4</sup> This is a negotiation between social reality and sacred texts without which a group would either need to abandon their stance on the text's continued authority and relevance or the group itself would lose viability.

The scriptural narratives portray Israel as especially vulnerable in the transitional period of the exodus and wilderness narratives. Thus, the social function of both the scriptures' stipulations against exogamy and idolatry and Israel's possession of the Torah was Israel's differentiation from the nations. For this reason, the exodus and wilderness narratives are reused in Second Temple literature to function as warnings against compromising group differentiation in situations in which Judean identity was especially vulnerable, as under foreign domination and in the diaspora.<sup>5</sup> In this context, the Sinai and wilderness rebellion narratives are episodes that compromised Israel's social identity precisely by eroding their differentiation from all other groups (τὰ ἕθνη).<sup>6</sup> For this reason, these narratives are woven into the fabric of Second Temple reinterpretation of scripture as warnings against deviance. In this milieu, Paul addresses intergroup relations by reinterpreting the exodus and wilderness narratives for his gentile Corinthian communities to warn of the identity-threatening dangers of compromise with values of the competing aspect of their social identities as members of Greco-Roman culture. Later in the same correspondence, he appeals to portions of the same scriptural narratives particularly to address the intragroup tensions between himself and those among the Corinthians who are criticizing him and his ministry. Thus, the social function of scriptural interpretation in the Second Temple period provides the general framework in which to make sense of Paul's socially contextual and socially formative arguments, while Social Identity Theory can provide the more specific categories for analysis.

### 3. Overview of Social Identity Theory (SIT)

The basis of SIT is the tenet that the social world is divided into social categories that have different relative statuses so that groups derive their significance and value in relation to, and especially in differentiation from, other groups (Hogg and Abrams 1988, p. 14). Individuals then derive a significant part of their identity from the social categories or groups of which they are members (Hogg and Abrams 1988, p. 19). Thus, Tajfel defines social identity as “that *part* of an individual's self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership” (Tajfel 1978b, p. 63). There are thus three components of social identity: the *cognitive* awareness of membership in a group, the *evaluative* assessment of the value of one's group and membership in it (especially over against other groups), and the *emotional* belonging and connectedness of group membership and attitudes toward outsiders (Tajfel 1978a, pp. 28–29). To make sense of the world, individuals sort the social world into groups in a process of social categorization, and then identify with one or more of these groups. What results from these processes are social identities (Turner 1982, pp. 18–19; see also Tajfel 1978b, pp. 61–64).

Tajfel concerned himself with the conditions for “intergroup behavior”, or when individuals behave according to a group membership (Tajfel 1978a, p. 28; cf. Tajfel 1978c,

p. 24). On the opposite end of the spectrum is “interindividual behavior”, where an individual behaves more in response to individual traits and interpersonal relationships with minimal regard for group memberships (Tajfel 1978a, pp. 41–44; Tajfel and Turner 1979, pp. 34–35). Intergroup behavior depends on salience, or the degree to which an individual perceives a group membership as valuable or central to their self-identity in a given social situation.<sup>7</sup> Since every individual is a member of multiple groups, the salient one in a given instance will be the one that has greater clarity of membership (cognitive), extent of evaluations or connotations of the membership (evaluative), and emotional investment in it (emotional) (Tajfel 1978a, p. 39). This means that a leader can increase group behavior by increasing these factors of membership salience. Since social identity negotiation is inherently socially comparative, increasing salience often means positive differentiation of a group over against outgroups (Turner 1987b, pp. 29–30; Tajfel and Turner 1986, pp. 16–17; Tajfel 1978c, pp. 83–86; Hogg and Abrams 1988, p. 23).

To use SIT to analyze texts, supplementation is necessary due to the nature of SIT. First, since SIT in practice assumes “a single ingroup-outgroup categorization” (Roccas and Brewer 2002, p. 88), Social Identity Complexity Theory (SIC) provides categories toward articulating how a person perceives the relationship among their *multiple* group memberships that are in play at any given time. Second, since SIT describes group behavior in ad hoc and punctiliar rather than enduring groups, it is necessary to provide a category by which to identify and describe *behavior* that group members use to mark boundaries, stereotype, or identify deviance. SIT’s companion theory, Self-Categorization Theory (SCT) supplies this. In seeking to explain “how individuals are able to act as a group at all” (Turner 1987a, p. 42), SCT delineates types of group behavior that result from individuals’ identification with a group. Among these behavioral effects are group cohesiveness and conformity to group norms (Turner 1982, pp. 31–35; 1987a, pp. 65–66). Another necessary component will account for any diachronic elements or practices by which groups maintain or interpret their own narrative past and project their group’s future.<sup>8</sup> This component would thus include the interpretation of sacred texts, which provide the resources for identity negotiation in response to new social situations.<sup>9</sup> Thus, it becomes necessary to add two components of social identity to Tajfel’s original trio, resulting in a model of five broad categories—cognitive, evaluative, emotional, behavioral, and temporal—with each subdivided and concretized in specific textual features that realize these aspects of social identity, resulting in the detailed model outlined in Appendix A.<sup>10</sup>

#### 4. Application: 1 Corinthians 10:1–22

In this passage, the *cognitive component* is realized primarily through group references and shared knowledge. Paul’s use of group labels indicates his social categorization. The kinship terms ἀδελφοί and ἀγαπητοί μου identify and define the Corinthians positively, but Paul also defines them negatively (by who they are *not*) through categorization and differentiation from outgroups. Thus, though having a genealogical connection with Israel’s wilderness generation (οἱ πατέρες, v. 1),<sup>11</sup> they are distinct from “Israel according to the flesh” (v. 18)<sup>12</sup> and ought to be distinct from those who sacrifice to demons and thereby become κοινωνοὺς τῶν δαιμονίων (“partners of demons”, v. 20). Given the probable allusion in v. 20a to Deut 32:16–17 LXX, which had already interpreted Israel’s idolatry as sacrifice to demons (cf. Ps 105:37 LXX), Paul here describes Israel’s past idolatrous behavior (and not their legitimate sacrifices through the Temple cult) as deviant (Hays 1989, p. 93; Meeks 2003, pp. 99–100). The lexical emphasis in Deut 32 on the *foreignness* of idolatrous practice raises the intergroup issue of insufficient differentiation from τὰ ἔθνη,<sup>13</sup> which is also the issue Paul sees the Corinthians facing in relation to the practices of their own culture.

With the quantitative expression with the five-fold repetition of πάντες (“all”, vv. 1–4), Paul describes the wilderness generation as a homogenous whole that is identified and characterized by these group-defining experiences.<sup>14</sup> However, he signals a disjunction (ἀλλ’) between these group experiences and God’s evaluation of that generation: God “was



not pleased with *πλείοσιν αὐτῶν* ("the majority of them", v. 5). This partitive expression identifies a subgroup within the "all" of vv. 1–4. Since Paul has already established shared experience between the Israelites and the Corinthians by describing the wilderness experiences in terms of baptism and eucharistic meal (vv. 2–4) and identifying the rock as Christ (v. 4), the distinction between "all" and "the majority" subgroup hints already at the possibility of an analogous deviant subgroup within the Corinthians' group (see also [Works 2014](#), p. 63). Paul describes the subgroup of the wilderness generation (indicated by the four-fold repetition of the partitive expression *τινες αὐτῶν*, "some of them", vv. 7–10) exclusively negatively through expressions of divine displeasure and deviant behavior. To move the Corinthians toward adopting this assessment, Paul appeals to shared knowledge through questions with negative particles (vv. 16, 18, 22) that anticipate an affirmative answer, thus functioning interpersonally by involving the recipients in the discourse and building on the foundation of common knowledge.

The *evaluative component* consists of differentiation and evaluation/assessment, which take as their starting point the SIT tenet that a fundamental component of social identity involves defining "us" negatively, what "we" are *not*.<sup>15</sup> This is evident in verse 6, which begins a five-fold differentiation between the wilderness generation and the Corinthians using repeated comparative (*καθώς* (x5), *καθάπερ*) expressions (vv. 6–10) by which Paul exhorts the Corinthians to differentiate themselves from this group by avoiding (*μηδὲ* (x4)) their behavior. The repeated pairing of "us versus them" language indicates such intergroup differentiation in vv. 6–10,<sup>16</sup> thus establishing this subgroup of the wilderness generation as an outgroup. Differentiation continues in v. 11 with the far demonstrative pronoun *ἐκεῖνοις* (cf. *κακεῖνοι* in v. 6) as a reference to *those* people to whom these things happened, in contrast to the first-person plural *us* (*ἡμῶν*) for whose instruction they were written (v. 11). Similarly, Paul's shift in grammatical person in vv. 20–21 demonstrates that the mutually exclusive ritual meals are supposed to differentiate the Corinthians from the outgroup of idolaters. Thus, for Paul here, who the Corinthians *are not* is as fundamental as who they are, thus illustrating the fundamental role of intergroup differentiation in social identity negotiation.

Paul also moves beyond differentiation to evaluation. Because of the role of positive group differentiation in identity negotiation, negative evaluation of outgroups and positive evaluation of the ingroup are closely intertwined.<sup>17</sup> Thus, in contrast to the deviant subgroup of the wilderness generation, which Paul describes as objects of divine displeasure, desirous of evil things, and as idolaters (vv. 5–7), is his positive description of the ingroup through the nominalization as those "on whom the ends of the ages have come" (v. 11). Such an expression of special privilege or special revelation<sup>18</sup> has social significance, since "a group that possesses information to which no one else has access is a group strongly conscious of the boundaries between itself and nonmembers" ([Meeks 2003](#), p. 92). Thus positioned at the ends of the ages as those for whose instruction these things were written (v. 11), the ingroup has a perspective unavailable to the wilderness generation and thus one that differentiates them from that group.

The *emotional component* is expressed in belonging and aversion, which are two sides of the same coin. Paul expresses intergroup aversion when he characterizes idol meals as worship of and partnership with demons, which he expressly does not want for the Corinthians (v. 20);<sup>19</sup> however, the need to express this indicates the Corinthians' lack of aversion to these practices that Paul finds unfitting for insiders.<sup>20</sup> At the same time, the relational tensions evident in 11:17–34 indicate aversion toward *fellow group members*,<sup>21</sup> indicative of what Tajfel called "interindividual behavior" and Turner qualified as the accentuation of individual differences among group members that is characteristic of a less cohesive group ([Tajfel 1978a](#), p. 41; [Turner 1987a](#), pp. 62–63). Paul seeks to correct this tension by fostering intragroup belonging first through kinship terms.<sup>22</sup> The sibling metaphor capitalizes on cultural expectations for sibling behavior to foster belonging, mutual responsibility, and cohesiveness within the group.<sup>23</sup> The kinship term in v. 1

(ἀδελφοί) and the term of affection in v. 14 (ἀγαπητοί μου) draw the Corinthians' attention to their commonality as an ingroup and with Paul, and this accentuation of ingroup commonality over against outsiders increases the likelihood that the Corinthians will view membership in the ἐκκλησία as salient.<sup>24</sup> The effect is increased by the "disclosure formula" (οὐ θέλω γὰρ ὑμᾶς ἀγνοεῖν, ἀδελφοί, ὅτι... , v. 1) which functions to "create confidence, to impart a sense of closeness, and to convey a feeling of common knowledge, which is hidden from outsiders" (Aasgaard 2004, p. 278).

Paul's attribution of communal language<sup>25</sup> (κοινωνοί, v. 18; κοινωνοὺς, v. 20) to the group appeals to intragroup belonging by associating ritual practice with its social effect of intragroup communion. This is confirmed by the three-fold use of first-person plural verbs describing the ingroup ritual (εὐλογοῦμεν, "we bless"; κλῶμεν, "we break"; μετέχομεν, "we partake", vv. 16–17). These articulate the ritual's communal, group-oriented focus and thus social belonging among the participants, even as they also commune with Christ, the host.<sup>26</sup> Together, the shared ritual and the first-person plural verbs characterize the group by their unifying ritual practice that distinguishes them from outsiders (v. 21). Paul directly associates the one loaf with the one communal body, capitalizing on the multivalence of "body" to anticipate his discussion of the divisions in the communal body in the Lord's supper practice (11:17–34) and the extended communal body metaphor (12:12–31). This communal metaphor asks the Corinthians to think of themselves as one cohesive, interdependent unity and behave accordingly,<sup>27</sup> thus rhetorically creating a superordinate or common ingroup identity.<sup>28</sup> By accentuating ingroup commonality, all these features potentially increase mutual attraction among ingroup members (cohesiveness) and therefore increase the likelihood that members will conform to group behavioral norms (Turner 1987a, pp. 59–66), including especially clear differentiation from the idolatry of outsiders.

The *behavioral component* of social identity draws attention to the fact that in enduring groups, practices and behaviors function both to define the ingroup and to maintain intergroup boundaries. This applies to formal rituals, shared practices, and group expectations of moral behavior.<sup>29</sup> Especially significant are behaviors that group members perceive as characteristic of and/or differentiating their group from others,<sup>30</sup> which can be expressed both prescriptively and descriptively. In 1 Cor 10:1–22, Paul refers to prescriptive norms with the five-fold directive to avoid the behavior of the wilderness generation subgroup (vv. 6–10), which he further establishes as deviant through the rehearsal of the divine judgments as behavioral assessments of the highest authority. In this way, he establishes this deviant subgroup as a negative exemplar whose behavior the Corinthians should interpret as patterns (τύποι) to be avoided (v. 6).<sup>31</sup> Paul has created a dense concentration of behavioral directives, including the cluster of four directive verbs and five comparative expressions (vv. 6–10), the indirect warning with βλέπω (v. 12), and the direct command to "flee from idolatry" (using spatial language to heighten the differentiation, v. 14). Together, these features suggest that the alternative to heeding this extended warning of the deviant outgroup is to "provoke the Lord" (v. 22) and thus risk divine judgment themselves.<sup>32</sup> This is further supported by the mutually exclusive nature of idol meals and the Lord's supper ("you are not able to drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons . . .", v. 21), which makes the former inappropriate and deviant for ingroup members.<sup>33</sup> There is thus a dual thrust in Paul's explication of the Lord's supper in 10:1–22: its relationship with and embodiment of cohesiveness in the social body in vv. 16–17 (intragroup) and its differentiating and boundary-forming functions evident in the mutually exclusive nature of the ritual with respect to idol meals in vv. 19–22 (intergroup). Thus, the shared ritual meal is intended both to unify the ingroup and to function as an embodied group boundary between them and outsiders.<sup>34</sup>

Since members of enduring groups must negotiate their social identities in response to new social situations, the *temporal component* assesses these diachronic strategies. The kinship term in v. 1, οἱ πατέρες ἡμῶν ("our ancestors") refers to the Israelite wilderness generation with a label that establishes a fictive genealogical connection between them

and the Corinthians.<sup>35</sup> Thus, though the gentiles among the Corinthians do not share biological descent from these ancestors, Paul establishes their “cultural-ideological descent” not only through the use of οἱ πατέρες ἡμῶν but also through the parallel language by which he associates the exodus and wilderness narratives with the Corinthians’ experiences of baptism and eucharist.<sup>36</sup> This is thus one example of “how notions of shared ancestry and genealogies feature in both Jewish and early Christian texts and how a sense of shared kinship is deployed to express and develop group identity” (Horrell 2020, p. 71).<sup>37</sup> Whether or not Paul’s identification of the wilderness rock with Christ builds on existing tradition,<sup>38</sup> the social function of the interpretation (cf. also testing Christ in v. 9) is to establish parallels between the two groups separated by time but connected through a common narrative. While establishing a shared history should increase a group’s salience and cohesiveness, the more pressing goal in this context is to suggest the existence of a deviant subgroup within the Corinthian communities parallel to that in the wilderness generation.

Paul’s quotation of Exod 32:7 is especially fitting for him to introduce here since, just as some of the Israelites “sat down to eat and to drink” and ultimately committed idolatry, so also some Corinthians, in wanting to sit down and eat and drink at idol meals, were in the same danger (Hays 1999, p. 398). Given the consistently negative evaluation of this paradigmatic apostasy, Paul’s association of it with the Corinthians’ idol feasts establishes the latter as dangerous, since the precedent in their sacred texts is that this behavior leads to divine judgment. In thus appealing to one of several “possible social identities”<sup>39</sup> from the past group narrative (i.e., of idolaters under judgment) and projecting a possible future social identity of imitating that example and incurring judgment, Paul exerts social influence on the Corinthians’ behavior with respect to idol meals. These socially creative interpretive moves are based on Paul’s stance on the relationship between the scriptures and the ingroup in vv. 6 and 11, where he uses the language of τύποι/τυπικῶς. Doing so establishes the wilderness group as negative exemplars to avoid,<sup>40</sup> but given the context of the ingroup as those “on whom the ends of the ages have come”, Paul is also prioritizing the Corinthian group as occupying a privileged position and perspective that other groups lack.<sup>41</sup> Ideally, the Corinthians will lean into this differentiation and extend it to their ritual meal practices. Thus, Paul later (11:17–34) presents the ingroup’s Lord’s supper ritual, in contrast to those rituals that are off limits, as encompassing their entire group narrative: it draws on the past through oral tradition originating with their founder, Jesus; embodies in the present the reality of the group’s unity and interdependence as one body distinct from other groups; and anticipates the future shared fate of participation in the Lord’s return.<sup>42</sup>

The foregoing social identity analysis of 1 Cor 10:1–22 in its wider discourse context well illustrates the complexity of identity negotiation since, as in Social Identity Complexity Theory, the Corinthians are not functioning with a single ingroup–outgroup categorization but as members of multiple groups simultaneously. Even within the gathered ingroup communities, their practice of the Lord’s supper indicates that subgroups have formed around other group memberships according to status or wealth (hence, Paul can distinguish “those who have” from “the have-nots” in 11:22). With respect to these divisive, competing memberships, Paul’s communal language urges toward unity in social diversity, a type of what Roccas and Brewer (2002, p. 91) have called a “merger” approach. At the same time, however, some Corinthians have apparently “merged” their membership in Corinthian social culture with their membership in the community of Jesus-followers in ways that Paul finds unacceptable. There are practices and values of the former that for him are fundamentally incompatible with the latter, namely, idol meals and sexual immorality. On these values, Paul pushes for an approach more akin to what Roccas and Brewer (2002, p. 90) have called “dominance”, in which the Corinthians’ membership in the believing community must overrule any other membership where the values of the two groups conflict. Thus, whereas in a text like Galatians Paul can urge toward a “merger” approach of unity across ethnic lines when the common shared membership between the two groups is that both belong to the Jesus movement (Kok 2014), it is not the case that for Paul maximal inclusiveness is *always* the ideal. In some ways, Paul finds the Corinthians *too* inclusive

to the point of threatening the values and distinctiveness of the believing ingroup, and he draws attention to these incompatibilities and calls ingroup members to tighter group boundaries. This indicates not only the situation-specific nature of social identity salience that SIT and SCT have recognized but also that even the *same* individual leader, to the *same* recipients, in the *same* correspondence, can operate with different ideals of group membership interrelationships for *different group values*. Moreover, just as Paul and some of the Corinthians have different views of the prototypical ingroup member, they also seem to have different views of the prototypical leader, which is the main issue behind the next passage in which Paul uses exodus and wilderness narratives for a social goal.

### 5. Application: 2 Corinthians 3:1–4:6

In this text with several interpretive conundrums, a specific method has the benefit of prioritizing the text's features over various existing debates. The *cognitive component* of social identity analysis begins again with the groups Paul identifies, all of whom he describes according to their perception or lack thereof. Paul refers to a general group (πάντων ἀνθρώπων, "all people", 3:2; ἀνθρώπων, 4:2) whose association with revelation or openness (γινωσκομένη καὶ ἀναγινωσκομένη, "known and read" by all, 3:2; φανερούμενοι, "revealed", 3:3; φανερώσει τῆς ἀληθείας, "with revelation of truth", 4:2) indicates their function as witnesses of some aspect of his ministry. Paul refers to the second group, the υἱοὶ Ἰσραὴλ, twice in relation to their inability to gaze intently at Moses's face (μὴ δύνασθαι ἀτενίσαι, 3:7; πρὸς τὸ μὴ ἀτενίσαι, v. 13) and describes their minds as dull (v. 14). The final outgroup includes οἱ ἀπολλυμένοι ("the perishing", 4:3; cf. 2:15), for whom the gospel is *veiled*, and οἱ ἀπίστοι ("the unbelievers", 4:4), whose minds are "blinded" so that they "do not see the illumination" in the gospel of the glory of Christ (4:4).

In stark contrast, Paul describes the first-person plural ingroup as beholding with unveiled faces (3:18) and having God shine into their hearts for the illumination of knowledge of God's glory in the face of Christ (4:6). In this way, Paul frames revelation as a fundamental group-defining trait or, in social identity terms, a prototypical one.<sup>43</sup> This trait is sourced in God (via illumination of knowledge, 4:6), Christ (via rendering the veil ineffective, 3:14), and the Spirit (in whose presence the veil is removed and who thus is the source of the transformation of those who are unveiled, 3:17–18), who are thus founding figures of the group. These descriptions of the ingroup's revelation in 3:18 and 4:6 reactivate the language of glory, veiling, and face from the Exod 34 narrative retold in 3:7–14a. This, along with the three-fold repetition of the "how much more" logic (3:8, 9, 11) establishes the Exod 34 narrative as a cognitive frame of reference by which the ingroup members define themselves as those who are unveiled and thus perceive, over against those groups that are blind.

Perception of revelation is also the main criterion for differentiation between groups in the *evaluative component*.<sup>44</sup> Paul evaluates the "sons of Israel" negatively by attributing their inability to gaze at Moses's face to their dull minds (3:7, 13), and their descendants in Paul's day are also veiled (3:14–15). However, the sharpest differentiation is with the outgroup that Paul negatively evaluates using a three-fold reference to their hindered perception: the gospel is *veiled* to them, the god of this age *blinded their minds*, and they are *not able to see* the illumination in the gospel (4:3–4).<sup>45</sup> This cluster of expressions contrasts sharply with Paul's positive assessment of the (first-person plural) ingroup by the same criterion of perception/revelation in 4:6: "the God who said, 'from darkness light shall shine' shined in our hearts for the illumination of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ". Paul thus evaluates the ingroup positively and outgroups negatively according to the former's privileged status or revelation and the latter's secondary status and ignorance, evaluations that serve to legitimate the ingroup.<sup>46</sup> In 4:6, the cluster of words in Paul's ad hoc semantic chain of perception/revelation (σκοτόν, φῶς, λάμπει, ἔλαμψεν, φωτισμόν, γνώσεως, δόξης) climaxes with a maximal positive assessment of the ingroup according to the criterion of perception and revelation. This differentiates them from three groups: the sons of Israel who were not able to see in Exod 34 (2 Cor 3:7, 13),



first-century Israel who remains veiled outside of the Jesus movement since only “in Christ” does the veil become ineffective (vv. 14–15), and most sharply from those for whom Paul’s gospel is veiled because their minds are blind so that they cannot see (i.e., perceive; 4:3–4). “They” are veiled, but “we” are the unveiled, the ones who *see*.

This differentiation and evaluation also contribute to the *emotional component* of social identity in that the ingroup shares the experience of unhindered access to revelation (3:18; 4:6). Paul’s use of the first-person plural frames the transforming nature of that revelation (μεταμορφούμεθα, 3:18) as insider revelation and insider experiences, which would ideally increase the Corinthians’ sense of commonality. Other than the ad hoc kinship between Paul and the Corinthians in 3:2 (“our letter, written on our hearts”), there is a noticeable paucity of emotional aspects in this section, which is what we would expect in a situation characterized by relational tension between Paul and the Corinthians. The wider context indicates this intragroup conflict in possible negative assessments of Paul’s changed travel plans as inconsistency (1:17) and calling God as witness to the veracity of his explanation (1:23). The eight-fold repetition of λύπη/λυπέω that follows in 2:1–11 indicates the emotional nature of this tension.<sup>47</sup> Its social or relational nature is evident not only through the use of personal pronouns indicating agency and relationality (e.g., “if I caused *you* pain”, “the one who is caused pain *by me*”, v. 2) but also by Paul’s language of “forgiveness”.<sup>48</sup> The amount of explanation that Paul devotes to this misunderstanding (1:12–2:11) indicates that this intragroup tension between some Corinthians and Paul is an important social frame for the rest of the letter, not least Paul’s descriptions of his ministry in 2 Cor 3–4.<sup>49</sup>

Other than Paul’s descriptions of his own behavior and that of his team in contrast to unnamed others (2:17; 4:2), the *behavioral component* is limited to implicit behavioral assessments. This suggests that, unlike in 1 Cor 10, behavior as such is not the problem here but rather the relational tension with Paul. Though no outgroups have prescribed or described behavior, Paul indicates that their lack of perception is a culpable state. In attributing Israel’s inability to see to their “dull minds” (3:13–14), Paul references a scriptural motif of Israel’s dullness, hardheartedness, or being “stiff-necked” that the scriptural texts regularly interpret as a willful condition related to disobedience (e.g., Neh 9:16–17, 29; Isa 6:10; Jer 7:26; Zech 7:12). Notably, Israel is described as “stiff-necked” several times in the wider narrative context of Exod 34 (32:9; 33:3, 5; 34:9).<sup>50</sup> The lack of perception of those Jews/Judeans in Paul’s day who have a veil over their hearts (2 Cor 3:15) is also culpable, since the fact that Moses removed the veil when turning to the Lord (v. 16) and that the ingroup is also unveiled (v. 18) indicate that persistent veiledness is an avoidable state. Finally, though the most sharply differentiated outgroup was passively blinded by the god of this age (4:4), their nominalization as “unbelievers” provides an indirect assessment of their blindness as a deviant *state* enduring because of the implied deviant *behavior* of unbelief. This passage thus contributes to the behavioral aspect of the Corinthians’ social identity indirectly through the deviant blindness of other groups that supplies a foil for the ingroup’s perception and revelation.

In 2 Cor 3:1–4:6, the *temporal component* takes the form of Paul’s re-interpretation of scripture, which he reinterprets using three socially creative strategies. First, he retells the Exod 34 narrative in a way that establishes parallel revelatory opportunities for Israel (past and present) and the Corinthian ingroup. He does so by borrowing the δόξα, πρόσωπον, and veiling language from his retelling of the scriptural narrative in 2 Cor 3:7–14a and applying it to the situation of the present-day ingroup in 3:18 and 4:6 to portray both groups as sharing the opportunity to gaze at unveiled glory, whether in Moses’s face or in Christ’s. In Paul’s “how much more” argument (3:8–10), he transfers the language of Exod 34 to believers (3:18) and then finds the climax of the extended veiling metaphor in the face of Christ (4:6). The combined force of these interpretive moves is that, for Paul, the glorified face of Moses anticipated the glory that believers behold in the face of Christ through Paul’s ministry. This is the sense in which the surpassing glory of Christ eclipses (in hindsight) the glory of Moses (3:10).<sup>51</sup>

Second, Paul establishes a type of cultural–ideological descent by portraying unveiled Moses as a prototype or founding group member of the ingroup—the unveiled—who have sight and revelation. To do so, Paul first uses a “how much more” argument to establish Moses and his ministry as a frame of reference for the ingroup’s identity (3:7–11), clarifying that the Israelites’ inability to gaze was not due to Moses’s veiling but their dull minds (3:12–13).<sup>52</sup> Then, in 3:16, the paraphrase of Exod 34:34 (when Moses unveiled while speaking with God)<sup>53</sup> establishes Moses as the first, prototypical figure to have unveiled revelation. When Paul reactivates the “glory” and transformation of Moses’s face (μεταμορφούμεθα) from the Exod 34 narrative and attributes both to “we all with unveiled face” (v. 18), he characterizes the first-person plural ingroup by that unveiled state of glory and revelation first characteristic of Moses.<sup>54</sup> Moses is thus a prototype, a group member who most fully embodies the ingroup’s most valued identity traits and maximizes differences from outgroups (Turner 1987a, p. 47).

Finally, Paul draws on the resources of the scriptural narrative to establish parallels between responses to Moses’s ministry and Paul’s own. Paul repeatedly returns to the first-person plural, especially at crucial steps of the argument (3:4, 12; 4:1, 7), while the two comments on the present day (ἄχρι γὰρ τῆς σήμερον ἡμέρας, “for until the present day”, 3:14; σήμερον, “today”, 3:15) bring the implication of the Moses discussion into Paul’s time. Most notably, Paul describes Moses’s ministry and his own in parallel terms: associated with glory but with negative responses by those who are veiled, unable to see, and with dull or blind minds. In Paul’s hands, the veil becomes a metaphor for the spiritual condition that led to the rejection of both Moses and himself. In drawing a comparison between responses to the two ministers and explaining both as resulting from the “veil”, Paul categorizes those who oppose him and his gospel as those who fail to perceive because of their spiritual blindness and not his ineffectiveness.<sup>55</sup> In thus exonerating Moses, Paul simultaneously exonerates himself.

## 6. Conclusions

In 1 Cor 10:1–22, Paul closely associates wilderness Israel with the Corinthians through the genealogical link and parallel experiences (vv. 1–4). This means that his introduction of the subgroup within that generation and his evaluation of them as deviant (vv. 5–6) suggest a parallel deviant subgroup within the Corinthian group. By calling for differentiation from this deviant behavior (vv. 7–14), Paul aims to secure the ongoing existence of the group, since a group without boundaries and differentiation ceases to exist. In this light, all the appeals to the group’s importance and commonality among its members—kinship and interdependence, privileged perspective at the end of the ages, shared ritual meal, and their shared group narrative and anticipated future rehearsed through ritual and tradition—potentially increase membership salience to justify the differentiation that Paul insists on. Paul’s reinterpretation of scripture to call for intergroup differentiation while bolstering intragroup commonality and belonging thus demonstrates the social creativity necessary for a minority group to exist within a dominant culture in new social situations that threaten its distinctiveness.

In the very different context of 2 Cor 3:1–4:6 and tension between Paul and the Corinthians, Paul’s overarching strategy is to use Exod 34 to interpret response to his ministry. To do so, he describes and evaluates all groups according to their perception or lack thereof, establishing perception as the fundamental ingroup trait and salient criterion of differentiation. The “how much more” argument establishes the scriptural narrative as a frame of reference for the Corinthians’ own identity as those who are unveiled. In this, they have cultural–ideological descent from Moses who, as the first to behold the glory of God unveiled and be transformed, is the prototypical group member of the ingroup now identified by their unveiled beholding. Paul also parallels Moses, in that both ministries of glory received responses of veiledness, blindness, and dull minds, demonstrating that the authoritative text provides a precedent for negative response that was not the fault of the minister.

This application of a robust interpretive model provides a tool by which to analyze and articulate the complexity of negotiating social identities in the early Christ movement. In doing so, it demonstrates the ways that Paul exerts social influence to shape individual Corinthians' social identities in specific situations, and his socially creative uses of scripture to do so places him firmly within the milieu of Second Temple Judaism even as the Corinthian communities are enmeshed in Greco-Roman culture.

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## Appendix A. Interpretive Model

### I. Cognitive Component: Self-Categorization

#### A. Participant reference

1. Named groups (Louw and Nida 1989, LN 11: Groups and Classes of Persons and Members of Such Groups and Classes; Cf. also Trebilco 2012; Trebilco 2017)
2. Plural pronouns for groups

#### B. Reference to groups and subgroups in quantitative terms (πᾶς/πάντες, τινές)

#### C. Genitive partitive expressions

#### D. Group beliefs<sup>56</sup>

1. Explicit statement of group belief: first-person plural of πιστεύω or equivalent
2. Implicit reference to group belief defining the group/movement:
  - a. Reference to a founding member
  - b. Statement or interpretation of significance of events related to group formation
3. Implied reference to group belief: appeal to authoritative source
4. Statement of position held by or characterizing any subgroup identified above

#### E. Shared knowledge

1. Indicative statements with first-person plural verb of knowing (οἶδα, γινώσκω)
2. Content built on but not defended or explained (ad hoc)
3. Questions formulated to expect agreement (with negative particles)

### II. Evaluative Component: Self-Differentiation and Self- and Other Assessment

#### A. Differentiation

1. Distinction or contrast between "us" (first- or second-person plural) and "them" (third-person verbs or pronouns)
2. Distinction or contrast between "us" (first- or second-person pronouns) and "others" (ἄλλος/-οι, ἕτερος/-οι, λοιπός/-οι; ἄλλογενής/-εῖς, ἀλλόφυλος/-οι, ἀλλότριος/-οι, ἄλλοεθνεῖς)
3. Distinction or contrast using plural near and/or far demonstratives (οὗτοι, ἐκεῖνοι)
4. Spatial differentiation of participants with adverbs (ἐξω, ἔσω; ὧδε, ἐκεῖ)
5. Antithetical/antonymous semantic pairs<sup>57</sup>

#### B. Evaluation

1. Stereotyping: references to groups as homogenous wholes (πᾶς, ὅλος, κόσμος, generic ἄνθρωπος/-οι, ἄπιστοι)
2. Positive appraisal of ingroup:
  - a. Expressions of divine approval/pleasure/blessing/election/provision

- b. Use of purity language (καθαρός, ἄμemptος, ἄσπιλος)
  - c. Expressions of privileged status or knowledge/revelation (e.g., φωτίζω, ἀποκαλύπτω, φανερόω and cognates; Louw and Nida 1989, LN 28: Know) (Nickelsburg 1985, pp. 73–89; Meeks 2003, p. 92)
  - d. Exclusive claims to legitimacy (Jokiranta 2013, pp. 31, 44, 57)
- 3. Negative appraisal of outgroup(s) or outsider:
  - a. Expressions of divine disapproval/displeasure/curse/judgment
  - b. Use of impurity language (ἀκάθαρτος, etc.)
  - c. Expressions of secondary status or ignorance (e.g., πωρόω, τύφλος)
  - d. Labels indicating moral failure (e.g., ἁμαρτωλοί, ἄδικοι)<sup>58</sup>
- III. Emotional Component: Belonging and Aversion
  - A. References to social tension or conflicts (Louw and Nida 1989, LN 39: Hostility, Strife)
  - B. Aversive use of kinship language (ψευδαδελφοί, τις ἀδελφὸς ὀνομαζόμενος) (Aasgaard 2004, pp. 300–2)
  - C. References to ingroup commonality/cohesiveness and interdependence
    - 1. Kinship language (Louw and Nida 1989, LN 10: Kinship terms)
    - 2. Communal terms (Louw and Nida 1989, LN 34: Association, e.g., κοιν-, μετέχω)
    - 3. References to shared experiences in first-person plural verbs
    - 4. Disclosure formulas (Aasgaard 2004, p. 278)
    - 5. Expressions of unity with εἷς/μία/ἓν
    - 6. Use of reciprocal pronoun
    - 7. Corporate metaphors for unity (e.g., body, temple, building)
- IV. Behavioral Component: Expectations/Norms and Deviance<sup>59</sup>
  - A. References to group behavioral norms
    - 1. Prescriptive/Directive references
      - a. Imperatives, first-person plural subjunctives, second-person negated subjunctives (prohibitions), some uses of future tense, παρακαλέω plus infinitive
      - b. Presentation/recommendation of prototypes as exemplars (may incl. language of imitation) or negative exemplars
    - 2. Descriptive references: indicative action verbs characteristic of ingroup and appraised positively
    - 3. Assessment of behavior
      - a. Expressions of outsider deviant behavior
      - b. Comparison of behavior to that of outgroup(s)
      - c. Using honor/shame language
      - d. Reference to what behavior should have been (e.g., with οὐκ questions)
  - B. Embodied boundaries
    - 1. Crossing boundaries: expressions of metaphorical outward (ἐκ, ἀπό) or inward (εἰς, πρὸς) spatial movement
    - 2. References to initiation rites
    - 3. References to rituals
- V. Temporal Component: Continuity and Renegotiation
  - A. Renegotiation in light of the past: re-interpretation of sacred texts
    - 1. Common experiences with past group (described in parallel language)<sup>60</sup>
    - 2. Comparative expressions between the cited text and current audience (incl. ὡς ... καί, κάθως, et al.)<sup>61</sup>
    - 3. Interpreted ambiguous referent or pronoun in cited text as reference to current audience



4. Specification of general group referent in cited text to narrower ingroup
5. Generalization/extension of group label in cited text for reference to contemporary group
6. Metaphorical extension/interpretation of element in cited text as reference to group
7. Expressions of priority of current situation for interpretation (e.g., τύπος, τυπικῶς; δι' ἡμᾶς λέγει; ἐγγράφη πρὸς νοουθεσίαν ἡμῶν)
8. "Genealogical descent": expressions of ancestry (πατήρ, πατεροί)
- B. "Cultural-ideological descent"<sup>62</sup>
  - a. Reference to or citation of oral tradition (may incl. παραδίδωμι)
  - b. Prototypes/exemplars shared between past and present
- C. Renegotiation in light of the future: shared fate
  1. References to shared eschatological future
  2. References to group-specific future/possible social identity

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Current scholarship views the designation "Jew(ish)" as anachronistic and potentially misleading and thus prefers "Judean(s)" to designate the ethnic group tied to the land of Judea. In keeping with scholarly practice, I will use "Judean(s)" when referring to the group of people and retain "Second Temple Judaism" when referring to the entire time period of the second temple and the texts that originate in that period.
- <sup>2</sup> E.g., 1 Macc 2–3 reappropriates the Levitical purging of Israel after the golden calf to bolster an ideology of military action against apostates (deSilva 2018, p. 279); Wisdom of Solomon emphasizes differentiation between Jews/Judeans and other peoples to discourage assimilation (deSilva 2018, pp. 141–42; Cheon 1997, pp. 24–25); LAB shapes existing texts to demonstrate the irrevocability of Israel's covenant status and the threat of divided allegiance in light of successive empires' domination (Fisk 2001, pp. 45–50); 2 Esdras/4 Ezra, 2 Baruch, and Josephus's *Jewish War* attempt to make sense of the Temple's destruction (deSilva 2018, pp. 50–51); the use of Adam traditions to respond to the threat of assimilating to Hellenism (Wisdom of Solomon, Jubilees), to develop a theodicy for destruction of the Temple and Israel's suffering more generally (4 Ezra, 2 Baruch), among other social functions (Levison 1987); Ben Sira uses the covenant with Phinehas to legitimate the Zadokite line for the high priesthood and then its Greek translation parallels Phinehas with Hasmonean priestly ideology (Pomykala 2008).
- <sup>3</sup> See also Falk (2007, p. 151) on the role of parabiblical texts in "intra-Jewish competition".
- <sup>4</sup> See also Falk (2007, esp. pp. 17, 141–53), whose study of texts that extend scriptural texts through imitation or reinterpretation focuses on their social function as invoking their authority in response to Hellenization or intra-Judaism polemics.
- <sup>5</sup> Lindqvist (2008, esp. pp. 86–88, 151–55) on this paradigmatic role of golden calf recollections in the Hebrew scriptures and its interpretation as a warning against the threat of idolatry in LAB 12:1–10.
- <sup>6</sup> See Barclay (1996, pp. 107–8) on Philo's repeated reference to Num 25 and concern about exogamous marriages leading Judeans/Jews to compromise ancestral traditions or monotheism, i.e., their differentiation from the nations. Similarly, Fisk (1998, pp. 20–22) argues that LAB's insertion of a reference to Babel into the golden calf episode interprets the Exod 32 idolatry as compromise with the nations.
- <sup>7</sup> Following the definition of "salience" from (Turner 1987a, pp. 44, 54) and (Oakes 1987, pp. 118–19).
- <sup>8</sup> See Cinnirella's (1998) extension of possible identities to possible social identities (and the role of narratives in these). See also "common fate" as among items that increase group salience in (Turner 1987a, pp. 52, 59–60).
- <sup>9</sup> Thus implementing the role of texts and their interpretation in identity formation, as throughout (Lieu 2004), and in line with developments in the role of tradition in social memory studies, as in (Misztal 2003, pp. 91–96).
- <sup>10</sup> Stargel (2018, pp. 30–31) has already expanded social identity to include behavioral and temporal components, and thus, the main headings in the model reflect the influence of her work. This model thus takes its initial starting point from her work and builds on it my own analysis of the social functions embedded within Greek texts and various insights from secondary literature, including various social-scientific and socio-cultural approaches, now integrated into a coherent framework that specifies how those insights contribute to Paul's social strategy identifiable within the text. This model comes from my unpublished doctoral thesis.
- <sup>11</sup> It is possible that this first person is exclusive rather than inclusive, but even if it were, Paul's argument in vv. 1–11 and the parallel experiences he establishes between the wilderness generation and the Corinthians would still constitute what Stargel (2018, pp. 15, 31) calls "cultural-ideological descent".
- <sup>12</sup> I understand this non-pejoratively as a neutral description of ethnic Israel.

- 13 Deut 32:16–17 LXX: “They provoked me by foreign things (ἄλλοτρίοις), with their abominations they embittered me; *they sacrificed to demons and not to God* (ἐθυσαν δαιμονίοις καὶ οὐ θεῷ), to gods whom they had not known (οἷς οὐκ ᾔδεισαν); new (καινοί), recent ones (πρόσφατοι) have arrived, whom their ancestors had not known (οἷς οὐκ ᾔδεισαν οἱ πατέρες αὐτῶν)”.
- 14 Cf. (Stargel 2018, pp. 43, 128), who has demonstrated that these events became group-defining events for Israel as indicated both in the repeated retellings of the narrative and the development of the ingroup-identifying appellation “the people whom God brought up out of Egypt” for Israel.
- 15 (Tajfel 1978a, pp. 28–29; 1978c, pp. 83–86; Cf. Lieu 2004, p. 271); “the act of describing those outside one’s own cultural group is, in part, a process of describing one’s own communal identity. It is by defining ‘them’ that the sense of ‘us’ is reinforced or reformulated” (Harland 2009, p. 162).
- 16 Thus: *us* (ἡμεῖς) versus “those” (οἱ ἄλλοι) who desired (v. 6b); *you* must not become idolaters (εἰδωλολάτραι γίνεσθε) as “some of them” (τινες αὐτῶν) were (v. 7a); *we* should not commit sexual immorality (πορνεύωμεν) as “some of them” (τινες αὐτῶν) did (v. 8a); *we* should not test (ἐκπειράζωμεν) Christ, as “some of them” (τινες αὐτῶν) did (v. 9a); and *you* must not grumble (γογγύετε), as “some of them” (τινες αὐτῶν) did (v. 10a).
- 17 In keeping with SIT’s description of intergroup comparison as leading to positive stereotyping of the ingroup and more negative stereotyping of relevant outgroups, or at least using outgroups as a foil for the ingroup (Tajfel 1978c, pp. 83–86). See examples of Second Temple texts in (Nickelsburg 2011, pp. 262–78).
- 18 See Jokiranta (2013, pp. 31, 44, 57) and Lieu (2004, p. 34) on Qumran interpretation in particular: “an interpretation of Scripture that is available only by special divine revelation establishes an alternative identity, albeit one that is persuasive only to those already within”.
- 19 Cf. (deSilva 2018, p. 228) on the reference in Bar 4:7 to this same tradition of Deut 32:16–17 in terms of social function: “the delegitimation of the Gentiles’ worship of idols as service offered to demons”.
- 20 Cf. (Cheung 1999, p. 40) on avoidance of idol food as “part of the larger issue of how Second Temple Jews were to maintain their Jewish identity in an environment dominated by Gentiles”. His overview (pp. 39–74) of Second Temple literature demonstrates the widespread aversion to idolatry and idol food as apostate behavior.
- 21 See the explicit references to intragroup tension or conflict (σχίσμα, Louw and Nida 1989, LN 39.13) in 11:18 and 12:25 but also more ad hoc intragroup expressions: “on the one hand, one hungers and on the other hand, another is drunk” (11:21), a disparity that demonstrates the opposite of a cohesive group characterized by group behavior; “despise the assembly of God” and “humiliate those who do not have” (11:22) indicate the existence of subgroups and provide Paul’s interpretation of the behavior in explicitly aversive terms.
- 22 Kinship terms include biological and fictive familial interpersonal relationships (Louw and Nida 1989, LN 11).
- 23 Aasgaard (2004, pp. 53–57, 93–106) demonstrates these values from a survey of ancient evidence and then through an in-depth treatment of Plutarch’s first-century treatise, “On Brotherly Love”.
- 24 “This use of ἀδελφοί [i.e., for fictive kinship within the early communities] *both* reflects and enhances the identity and cohesion of early Christian groups” (Trebilco 2012, pp. 38, 65). Cf. (Tucker 2010, p. 113) on this social function of kinship terms and (Birge 2002, p. 71; Tucker 2017, p. 48) on kinship language strengthening ingroup associations.
- 25 LN 34, “Association” (Louw and Nida 1989) and ad hoc communal expressions.
- 26 Cf. (Keightley 2005, p. 145). The social nature of the ritual meal is supported by Plutarch’s claim that κοινωνία is the reason for meals. Building on this evidence of Plutarch, Fotopoulos (2003, p. 164) sums up the communal nature of cultic meals as follows: “Κοινωνία at formal meals fostered a relationship between the host, fellow diners, and deities”. Moreover, he applies this to 1 Cor 10:14–22 (p. 176).
- 27 Lim (2017, p. 180) views the body metaphor as one means by which Paul “re-socializes” the Corinthians. In contrast to other ancient uses of the metaphor to maintain the status quo, Paul maintains both unity and diversity, emphasizing interdependence but not hierarchy. (See Martin 1995, pp. 92–96; see also Horrell 1996, pp. 181–84; Horrell 2016, pp. 134–35; Lim 2017, pp. 173–74.)
- 28 Cf. (Esler 2003, pp. 308–38) on the body metaphor and superordinate identity in Romans. On superordinate identity, see (Turner 1981, pp. 98–99; Gaertner et al. 2000, pp. 133–48).
- 29 All this Horrell (2020, pp. 94–99) has aptly called a “way of life”, which was fundamental to the identity of both Jewish/Judean and Christian groups.
- 30 Turner (1987a, p. 61) defines normative behavior as what “conforms to or exemplifies some valued, stereotypical characteristic of ingroup membership”.
- 31 Cf. (Kugel 1998, p. 16), who notes that a pattern for Second Temple literature is that “historical figures are not merely historical but instructional”, a pattern he also recognizes in 1 Cor 10:11.
- 32 This danger is heightened given that some Corinthians have already engaged in several of these deviant behaviors: sexual immorality in 1 Cor 5–6 and idolatry in chs. 8–10. Cheung (1999, p. 145) suggests a parallel between the Corinthians’ response to Paul as grumbling “against their God-appointed leader Paul, as the Israelites grumbled against their God-appointed leader Moses” (10:10). See also Fotopoulos (2003, pp. 231–32), who points out the connection between “testing Christ” (v. 9) and

“provoking the Lord to jealousy” (v. 22), suggesting that Paul chose these particular examples because of their application to the Corinthians specifically.

Thus supporting via textual analysis the conclusions of Fotopoulos (2003, pp. 64, 111–14, 174–76, 211–12) from his socio-cultural analysis of primary evidence regarding the inherent cultic nature of ritual meals in Greco-Roman culture. Given that the Hebrew Bible can speak of the temple’s altar as “the Lord’s table” (Mal 1:7, 12), this understanding of cultic communion with the deity is present in the Judean aspect of Paul’s social identity as well.

“Paul uses the symbolism of the Supper ritual not only to enhance the internal coherence, unity, and equality of the Christian group, but also to protect its boundaries vis-à-vis other kinds of cultic association” (Meeks 2003, p. 160).

Tucker (2020, p. 227) takes the first-person plural exclusively here to dispute a supersessionist reading. With Tucker, I would also argue against the view that “by the use of ‘our fathers’ here Paul has begun to write in-Christ gentiles into Israel’s covenantal identity by giving them Israelite ancestry in a manner that removes the existing Judean covenantal identity from Christ-following and non-Christ-following Jews”. However, it is possible to understand the pronoun inclusively without supersessionism by distinguishing between genealogical and cultural-ideological descent, the latter of which Paul provides for the gentiles without replacing the former.

“Cultural-ideological descent” is indebted to (Stargel 2018, pp. 15, 31). According to (Works 2014, p. 16): “Paul freely uses scripture as a source of his own teaching and instruction and invites the Corinthians to find in Israel’s sacred texts their own story, a story bound to a faithful and jealous God”. Cf. (Lieu 2004, p. 40) on the “radical resocialization” involved in using scriptural language of gentiles in 1 Pet.

See also (Johnson Hodge 2007, pp. 19–42) on this patrilineal feature of ancient texts in general, and the remainder of her monograph for how “Paul’s task as an apostle to the gentiles is . . . rewriting their genealogies” (p. 33) by inserting them into the lineage of Abraham by adoption. (Cf. Thiessen 2016, esp. pp. 105–28.)

For the options, see (Aageson 2006, pp. 165–67) and the primary texts there cited; and (Thiessen 2013, pp. 103–13). However, the social function makes it unnecessary to posit a pre-incarnate Christophany, as Thiessen does.

On “possible social identities”, see (Cinnirella 1998, pp. 235–36).

See Louw and Nida (1989, LN 58.59 and 58.60).

Cf. (Jokiranta 2013, pp. 177–82; Lieu 2004, p. 139) on claims to special revelation among Qumran; (Meeks 2003, pp. 92–93) on the social function of such claims.

Thus aligning with Cinnirella’s (1998, p. 235) description of “shared life stories or narratives of the group which tie past, present and predicted future into a coherent representation”. Keightley (2005, pp. 134–37) notes that founding events are the core of a group’s social memory that are rehearsed in rituals and applies this to the Lord’s supper ritual as rehearsal of Jesus’s last meal with the disciples, a founding event for the early church.

In part building on Westfall (2009, pp. 201–2), who argues that repetition of words in the same semantic domain provide cohesion in a discourse and indicates its topic. The chain of perception/revelation words, including those that Paul uses ad hoc in that way in this context, are as follows: δόξα (“glory”) when referring to a visible phenomenon, ἀτενίσαι (“to gaze”), ἐπωρώθη (“were dull”), τὸ κάλυμμα . . . μένει (“the veil remains”), κάλυμμα ἐπὶ τὴν καρδίαν αὐτῶν κεῖται (“a veil lies on their hearts”), περιαιρεῖται τὸ κάλυμμα (“the veil is removed”), ἀνακεκαλυμμένῳ (“unveiled”), κατοπτριζόμενοι (“beholding”), εἰκόνα (“image”), τὰ κρυπτά (“the hidden/unseen things”), ἐτύφλωσεν (“blinded”), αὐγάσαι (“to see”), φωτισμόν (“illumination”), σκότους (“darkness”), φῶς (“light”), λάμπει (“shall shine”), and γνώσεως (“knowledge”).

Though Paul’s differentiation of himself and his coworkers from unnamed others in 2:17 and 3:1 frames the passage as addressing the nature and manner of Paul’s ministry in contrast to that of others.

Cf. 2 Cor 2:15–16, where Paul used antonymous pairs (τοῖς σωζομένοις and τοῖς ἀπολλυμένοις, “to those being saved” and “to the perishing”; θάνατος and ζωή, “death” and “life”) and syntax (μὲν . . . δὲ) to differentiate sharply between two groups by their juxtaposing response to the “odor” of his ministry’s “triumphal procession”.

As Nickelsburg (1985, pp. 73–89) argues for this claim in Second Temple literature.

Louw and Nida (1989, LN 25, Attitudes and Emotions).

Louw and Nida (1989, LN 40.10, under Hostility, Strife).

Cf. Esler (2021, p. 97), who argues that Paul’s leadership is at stake throughout the entire letter.

Cf. Hafemann (1995, pp. 347–62), who interprets Paul as saying that Moses’s veiling resulted from the Israelites’ dullness and sinfulness in the wider narrative of Exod 32–34, so that Moses veiled to shield the Israelites from judgment that would come from seeing the residual glory of Yhwh in Moses’s face, given their rebelliousness. He thus recognizes the moral judgment inherent in their “dull minds”.

Hays (1989, p. 134): “the glory turns out to have been impermanent not because it dwindled away but because it has now been eclipsed by the greater glory of the ministry of the new covenant”. In other words, Paul is not claiming what “actually happened” in the narrative but interpreting it from the perspective of his own ministry.

Reading the syntax of the οὐ . . . ἀλλά construction the same way as in 2:17; 3:3 [x2], 5, 6; 4:1–2, 5; 4:18; 5:12, but especially 4:1 onward, all of which involve point-counterpoint pairs about what Paul does *not* do followed by a positive statement of what *is*

the case. In other words, the negated statement *precedes* the contrasting, affirmative statement. This means that grammatically it is more likely that καὶ οὐ καθάπερ (v. 13a) looks *forward* rather than backward, functioning with the ἀλλά clause of v. 14a. Thus, rather than interpreting these verses as a contrast between Moses and Paul, it is more defensible to translate vv. 13–14 as “And it is not like Moses veiled to prevent the Israelites from gazing at the goal of what is nullified; rather, [he veiled because] their hearts were dull”. See Land (2019, esp. pp. 265–76). Though, in extant Greek, this function of καθάπερ to introduce an imaginative construal of reality (i.e., contrary to fact, “as though”) is typically signaled by a non-finite verb and/or accompanying particle (see the examples there cited), he defends the likelihood that καθάπερ on its own could function like this in informal Greek (pp. 289–97). Paul is thus clarifying that the inability of Israel to gaze intently at Moses’s face was to preempt anyone interpreting the negative response as an evaluation of the minister, Moses. *Contra* Esler (2021, p. 126) and others who read Paul as criticizing Moses’s veiling as his “insincere attempt to cover up that impermanence” of the old covenant.

- 53 Note the close parallels between the two texts: ἡνίκα δ’ ἂν εἰσεπορεύετο Μωυσῆς ἔναντι κυρίου λαλεῖν αὐτῷ, περιηρεῖτο τὸ κάλυμμα (Exod 34:34). ἡνίκα δὲ ἐὰν ἐπιστρέψῃ πρὸς κύριον, περιαιρεῖται τὸ κάλυμμα (2 Cor 3:16).
- 54 Even Esler (2021, p. 130), who interprets the passage as negatively assessing Moses, sees 3:18 as indicating that “Christ-followers have the same privileged access to God that Moses had, whereas Judeans contemporary with them” remain veiled.
- 55 As Land (2019, p. 278) notes, “Paul’s discourse only makes sense on the assumption that Paul and Timothy are, throughout, understood to be veiled in some sense, with the point of the entire discussion of Moses and Exod 34 being to clarify in *what way* they are veiled and *to whom*”.
- 56 See Bar-Tal (1990, pp. 33, 36) on his technical definition of “group beliefs”.
- 57 Cf. Jokiranta (2013, p. 57) on “dualistic language” and its social function.
- 58 See Trebilco (2017, pp. 113–49), though he treats οἱ ἁμαρτωλοὶ on its own and not in conjunction with other words indicating moral failure, as here.
- 59 May (2004, esp. pp. 13–14, 28, 42) emphasizes how behavioral expectations function as boundary markers between insiders and outsiders as well as sanctioning deviant insiders.
- 60 Cf. Fishbane (1985, p. 353) on parallel language used to indicate an inner biblical typology in the absence of technical terms.
- 61 Cf. Fishbane (1985, p. 353), where he points out that in the Hebrew Bible, comparative expressions can function to indicate typology.
- 62 This wording is indebted to (Stargel 2018, p. 31).

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