Intertextuality and the metanarrative of new creation in Romans I: Sociological dimension

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Abstract

The application of the construct of new creation as the narrative substructure of Paul's letter to the church at Rome provides a coherent framework for drawing together the various motifs in the letter. Paul roots the story of Jesus Christ in the symbolic world of Israel's Scriptures and re-socializes the Christ-movement into the symbolic world of new creation inaugurated in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Drawing intertextually from Isaiah (Genesis and the Psalms), Paul depicts Jesus Christ as embodying the promises of YHWH, construed as his return and reign, to liberate Israel from exile, summon the nations to pledge allegiance to his absolute lordship and kingship, and transform natural creation. Three dimensions to the meta-narrative of new creation are identified: sociological, political, and ecological. In this article the sociological dimension will be discussed. In a subsequent article the political and ecological dimensions will be addressed.

Keywords: Intertextuality; new creation; metanarrative; sociological; social identity theory; group identity formation

Introduction

Concern over the environment has heightened in the last decade. Global warming and carbon dioxide emissions are reaching epidemic proportions. Cultural imperialism, the technological and economic hegemony of the global North, endangers the diversity of our world. The dominance of English as the medium of expression is pervasive, threatening the continued existence of indigenous languages. The cultural landscape, in terms of beliefs, attitudes, and values, is being eroded and consequently flattened.

Humanity appears also to be in a crisis. Despite the predictions that globalization would lead to ethnicity functioning in a diminished role because of increased inter-group contact through the use of technology, humanity continues to be polarized along ethnic lines. Tribal, national, racial, and ethnic divisions appear to run deep in dividing humanity.

Our existing context is not so far removed from the first century where many of these variables were present but not to the same degree. Rome was the imperial power of the world boasting significant military strength. Conquered nations were forced to accommodate to and become assimilated into the Roman way of life. Travel, goods, and services were expedited on the newly built roads controlled by Rome. Subtle but more significant was the influence of Hellenism; Greek became the *lingua franca* of the world. Civilization was defined in terms of Greek culture and language. Those who refused to conform to the hegemony of the Graeco-Roman world were labeled "barbarian".

Into this socio-political context, the apostle Paul writes a situational letter to the church at Rome that primarily engages pastoral concerns, particularly the sociological division between the weak and the strong (Rom 14-15) and the struggle to include the "other" as an equal without pressuring them to conform to a pre-determined socio-political and ethnic identity of what it means to be a

follower of Christ. Park (2003:ix, emphasis original) articulates the relevance of Paul's rhetorical discourse, "It is my conviction that both the *story* of his [Paul's] struggle and the *theological development* that accompanies it have a profound message for contemporary Christians who face the challenge of redefining our identity vis-à-vis 'others' in this increasingly pluralistic, postmodern, global village." This social and theological construction of the identity of self and the "other" will significantly influence the community identity of the Christ-movement in embracing diversity, advancing reconciliation, and contextualizing the missional communication of the gospel and thereby protect and preserve ethnic diversity in the face of the erosion and increasing homogenization of culture (Park, 2003:x).

This study utilizes intertextuality and narrative analogy to identify and explicate the *construct of new creation* as the overarching framework of Paul's letter to the church in Rome. Paul's intertextual leveraging of Israel's Scriptures is not haphazard nor mere proof-texting, but an intentional appeal to the traditions and narratives of Israel which he weaves into the metanarrative of the transformation of creation. I argue that Paul's socio-rhetorical strategy is to intertextually invoke Israel's Scriptures to frame the gospel, the apocalyptic revelation of the covenant justice/faithfulness (δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ - "righteousness of God" - Rom 1:16) of the creator-God, into an overarching narrative, new creation, in order to meet the socio-political exigencies of the Christ-movement in Rome and to establish Rome as a new base for his missional activity in proclaiming a universal gospel that is offered on equal terms to Israel and the nations.[1] Paul transforms widely accepted models of apocalyptic thought from a sharply drawn dualism in which the cosmos is perceived as evil and must be destroyed into one in which the cosmos is God's good creation and is in need of renewal. The soteriological and sociological model of Romans is that "redemption is the *recovery* of creation" (Adams, 2000:209, emphasis mine).

The intertextual matrix which Paul leverages includes Israel's Scriptures (particularly Isaiah, the Psalms, and Genesis), the ideology of Roman Empire, and the socio-political situation of the Christ-movement in Rome. The development of the meta-narrative of new creation is predominantly implicit and subtle utilizing echoes and allusions and socio-rhetorically relevant to the Christ-movement.

Research using intertextuality[2] has proven to be productive in understanding Paul's theology[3] as it lends itself, as a way of reading texts, both to lines of continuity[4] and discontinuity between Israel's Scriptures and the New Testament.[5] Punt incisively comments on the advantage of intertextuality as a methodology: "In the first place, intertextuality shifts the discussion from whether a text was quoted properly or not, to the 'far more productive' question of how the New Testament authors used the quoted text. It thus enables the understanding of 'how texts influence

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[1] Paul's use of Israel's Scriptures need not be dichotomized into an either/or approach with reference to intertextual exegesis or socio-rhetorical strategy. I will argue that Paul derives his interpretation primarily through intertextual exegesis of the Christ event but is then shaped rhetorically by the socio-historical and political exigencies of his audience.

[2] Julia Kristeva (1980:64-91), who coined the term intertextuality in 1966 in her essay "Word, Dialogue, and Novel", posited a dialogical relationship between texts. The "literary word of the text" is identified as "an intersection of textual surfaces rather than a point (fixed meaning)."

[3] Richard Hays' (1989) work on echoes and allusions in the letters of Paul has been particularly helpful. He notes, 'His [Paul's] faith, in short, is one whose articulation is inevitably *intertextual in character*, and Israel's Scripture is the *determinate subtext* that plays a constitutive role in shaping his literary production' (1989:16, emphasis mine). Other significant works on intertextuality include: Hays, Alkier, and Huizenga (2009), Tucker and Coleman (2014), Draisma (1989), and Hebel (1989).

[4] Keesmaat (1999:231) lists scholars who emphasize discontinuity between Paul and Israel's Scriptures such as Sanders and Räisänen. These advocate that Paul's interaction with Israel's Scriptures is mere proof-texting. Scholars emphasizing continuity are identified as Hays, Wright, Stockhausen, Beker (1980, 1982), Thielman, and Gaventa (2013) for whom the story of Israel (reinterpreted and transformed) is central to the work of God in Christ.

[5] Keesmaat (1999:48-51) enumerates a number of reasons favouring intertextuality as a methodological approach to Paul's theologizing. Chief among these is that intertextuality is fluid in that allows for disruption, transformation, and regeneration of existing traditions/texts.

readers and readers influence texts'" (1996:417).[6] Paul writes in continuity with Israel's Scriptures as he argues that the Christ event is in conformity with that predicated in Israel's Scriptures (Rom 1:2-4; 4).[7] He understands the story of Israel, anchored in the covenant with Abraham with its emphasis on blessing all the families of the earth (Gen 12:3; 18:18; 22:18; 26:4), to be fulfilled in the story of Christ (Gal 3:16-18). He brings into sharp relief the role of Israel to mediate the creator-God's blessings to the nations (even in their disobedience as reflected in Rom 11:11-12). He is also at liberty to engage Israel's Scriptures in fresh, imaginative ways because of the distinctiveness of the Christ event.

Paul does not simply restate the story from Israel's Scriptures.[8] The traditions of Israel are fluid enough to allow for a (re)interpretation and (re)shaping in light of the Christ event, the inclusion of the nations, and the socio-political situation of the Christ-movement. Paul roots the story of Jesus Christ in the symbolic world of Israel's Scriptures and *re-socializes* the Christ-movement into the symbolic world of new creation inaugurated in the *resurrection* of Jesus Christ (Rom 1:4). Drawing intertextually from Isaiah, Paul depicts Jesus Christ as *embodying* the promises of YHWH, construed as his return and reign, to liberate Israel from exile, summoning the nations to pledge allegiance to his absolute lordship and kingship, and transforming natural creation (Isa 40-66).

The constant litany of citations and the whispers of echoes and allusions from Israel's Scriptures in Romans work in concert in establishing the theme of Romans: the covenant righteousness and justice of the creator-God, apocalyptically revealed in the gospel, designed to redeem Israel, incorporate the nations, and transform all of creation, is fulfilled through the faithfulness of Christ and framed in a creator-creation relationship.

This meta-narrative is Paul's answer to the question of the "righteousness of God" (the question of theodicy): How can God be just in light of his promises to Israel since these promises, according to Israel's perception, do not appear to have materialized (Rom 9-11)? In answering this question, Paul (like Isaiah and the Exodus narrative) appeals to the identity of YHWH by engaging the questions: "Who is God?" and "Who controls history?" Paul and Isaiah (40:25-28; 42:5; 44:24; 45:6, 18-25) affirm that God is the *creator- and covenant-God* who demonstrates his absolute lordship over history by radically intervening within history to fulfill his purpose for Israel and all of creation. This apocalyptic intervention is conceptualized in terms of a creator-creation narrative. As the creator-God, he is the Lord of history who will bring the created order to realize the goal he had envisioned for creation from the beginning (Rom 8:28-39). What begins as an indictment against creation for rebellion against the creator-God (1:18-32), ends as a paean of praise, celebrating God as the creator-God who works all things for the good of creation (11:32-36; 8:28).

Paul envisages the resurrection as validating Jesus Christ's powerful sonship, contrasted to that of Adam, as the one in whom the nature, presence, and power of the creator-God is *immanent*. That which Adam, created in the image of God, failed to mediate, is now *immediate* in the Christ-event. Christ, in whom the image of the creator-God is perfectly presented, has been delegated the right to rule the cosmos (Gen 1:26-28). The resurrection is conceptualized as his investiture

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[6] Some biblical scholars view the term as overused and misunderstood and scholars who utilize it as jumping on a trendy bandwagon. See Stanley E. Porter, (1997:79-96) where he suggests that the term intertextuality be dropped from scholarly discussion altogether; Timothy K. Beal, (1992:27), states that the term "intertextuality" is evasive because it "was primarily developed in poststructuralism as a theoretical rather than a methodological term." Plett (1991:3-4) notes that 'there are some scholars who are opposed to intertextual readings.' They claim that those who practice intertextuality are still conducting source criticism and have merely changed the terminology to what is in vogue. Intertextuality is accused of being 'old wine in new wine skins.'

[7] See Jeremy Punt's article (1996:377–425) for an excellent treatment on how Paul establishes a dialogical relationship between Scripture, his interpretation of Scripture in the context of Christ.

[8] Hays (1989:14) eloquently states: 'He saw himself as a prophetic figure carrying forward the proclamation of God's word as Israel's prophets and sages had always done, in a way that reactivated past revelation under new conditions.' This process of reactivating Israel's Scriptures required him to *defamiliarize himself with those texts and then re-read them in the light of the gospel* (Hays, 1989:2, emphasis mine). Paul was adamant that the resultant transformation was continuous with and true to Israel's sacred Scriptures.

as the world's true lord and king *and* as the inauguration of new creation (Rom 1:4). The gospel is the radical summons to Israel, the nations, and all of natural creation to affirm their loyalty and *allegiance* to Jesus Christ as Lord (10:9-10) and the firstborn of new creation (8:29).

Why does Paul appeal to the creation narrative? It contextualizes the work of Christ, not only covenantally as the fulfillment of Israel's expectations (Rom 3:21-26; Rom 4), but more broadly in scope and earlier chronologically and theologically, in the larger narrative of creation (5:12-21). Paul appeals to the creation motif to root the work of Christ as a larger, more universal event, than the Exodus tradition for example. The creation narrative shapes the collective social identity of all humanity around Jesus Christ, the second Adam, and it provides the framework and motivation for engaging in God's mission in rescuing his creation. Paul looks back to the beginning point of creation as a referent for theologizing in regard to the Christ event, the sociological division between Israel and the nations, and Roman imperial ideology, for what the future entails.

This gospel narrative of new creation is not an abstract, theoretical, doctrinal statement merely to be believed and recited as a part of a creed and not to be acted upon. It has social, political, and cosmic dimensions that need to be explicated and implemented (Rom 6:4-5; 8:11, 18-30; 9:25-26; 10:9-12). Therefore, Paul utilizes the narrative of new creation to socio-rhetorically display the power of the gospel to transform natural creation, communities, relationships, imperial powers, and to position the *ekklesia* as central to God's new eschatological renewal (11:13-25; 12:5-16; 13:1-6; 14:1-23; 15:27). Followers of Christ are summoned to creative and imaginative ways to express what the implications are for the church in adopting a holistic, multidimensional reading of new creation. How does the church respond to an inaugurated new creation in the face of existing social, political, economic, and ecological evil in the world?

Prior research into the construct of new creation tends to emphasize one dimension (anthropological) over another (cosmic) or they are lumped into a cosmic framework without appreciating the nuances between sociological, political, and ecological readings.[9] This research identifies three dimensions to the meta-narrative of new creation that are intertextually invoked primarily from Isaiah: sociological, political, and ecological. These dimensions are lenses by which to view the construct of new creation. This article covers the first dimension - the sociological dimension of new creation.

Sociological dimension of new creation

The purpose of examining the social functions of the new creation motif is to uncover the reality to which Paul alludes to and its impact on communities and relationships. Is Paul's language of new creation merely a rhetorical device intended to bolster the faith of the believing community from the onslaught of Roman imperial ideology? Or has the Christ event really inaugurated a change in social and redemptive relationships that will eventually lead to the transformation of all of creation? Does Paul understand the new creation, inaugurated by the death and resurrection of Christ, as relating only to the *ekklesia* and as separate from the surrounding culture and society? Or does he view the *ekklesia* as the first-fruits and signposts of that new creation, living transformed lives, so that the message of new creation gains a credible reception from the rest of

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[9] Edward Adams' (2000) research is sociological in nature as he applies Peter Berger's (1969) theory of the construction and maintenance of social worlds to Romans and 1 Corinthians. His study is limited in scope as he focuses primarily on Paul's use of the terms κο,σμοj and κτι,σιj in the sociological process of 'world construction. Moyer Hubbard (2002) and Ryan Jackson (2010) investigate the phrase καινη. κτι,σιj in Gal 6:15, 2 Cor 5:17 (and Rom 8:18-30 by Jackson). Hubbard's work is limited to an anthropological reading of new creation focusing on the inward ethical transformation of the individual. Jackson's research avoids the false dichotomy between the anthropological and cosmic dimensions as he approaches the construct of new creation as 'an eschatologically infused soteriology consisting of the individual, the community, and the cosmos and which is inaugurated in the death and resurrection of Christ' (2010:6). These studies are driven by a lexical pursuit of key terms and are methodologically flawed as they ignore the intertextual allusions and echoes to new creation in Paul's letters.

society? Is the *ekklesia*, those who are in Christ, a microcosm of a larger cosmic renewal that is at work and will be consummated at his return? What role does the *ekklesia* play in the reconciliation of individuals, communities, and natural creation? How does the gospel, empowered by the resurrection, function intra-personally in social identity and interpersonally in community identity formation?

The division in the church at Rome between the Judeans and the nations (Rom 14-15), that is indicative of social group categorization and differentiation, necessitates that we approach the narrative of new creation from a social identity[10] theoretical framework.[11] Taken together, narrative intertextuality and social identity theory[12] provide significant explanatory power and a heuristic platform to investigate group identity formation in Romans.[13]

The theological construct of new creation has a sociological dimension that was very relevant to the Judean and non-Judean context of the first century. Paul's efforts may be described as a process of theologizing, i.e., applying the gospel to the social exigencies at Rome (division between the Christ followers and the hegemony of Roman imperial ideology) for the purpose of re-constructing humanity's social identity in an act (the death and resurrection of Christ) that is permeated with sociological and theological implications. I would posit that theological and sociological identity enjoy a dialogical relationship informing each other. This sociological dimension is holistic in nature and consists of a *soteriological* emphasis on the redemption, reconciliation, and transformation of humanity, *anthropological* with a focus on the renewal of the *imago Dei* by severing the link with Adam and reconstituting humanity in Christ through the eschatological Spirit, and *social* as the problem of the division between Israel and the nations is overcome with the creation of a new eschatological community of faith (the church being "in Christ" as the new superordinate ingroup) incorporating them as equal but ethnically distinct partners.

The nations are co-opted into a Judean symbolic universe articulated in Israel's Scriptures through the prophets (Rom 1:2-4) and the narrative of Abraham (Rom 4) as the ancestor of and prototype of the faith community. The story's universal dimension is evidenced in its expansion to the Adam-Christ analogy (Rom 5) of two actions that launch two epochs in diametrically opposite directions *affecting all of creation*. The cosmic dimension climaxes in the apocalyptic unveiling of the daughters/sons of the creator-God and the transformation of all of creation (8:18-30).

[10] Social identity theory (SIT) was initially formulated by Henri Tajfel and his colleagues and published in the *European Journal of Social Psychology* in 1971. Social identity theory was conceptualized to explain discrimination between groups (Tajfel, 1978:1). Tajfel and his colleagues surfaced the persistent need for differentiation between social groups directed at preserving their distinctiveness even in the face of 'increasing levels of communication and interdependence between groups' (Esler, 2014:15-16).

[11] I will investigate the sociological dimension to the narrative of new creation using intertextuality as a hermeneutical lens to focus the lexical, grammatical, and historical exegesis of Scripture. I will supplement this with a social psychology social identity approach in examining Paul's efforts in community/group identity formation. It is through rigorous exegetical investigation in pursuing the argument of the book of Romans that we can discover the historical situation and the essential issues to which we can apply social scientific categories and language to fully appreciate Paul's discourse. One must proceed cautiously so that the conclusions that are reached are based on sound exegesis and not on social theory that is read into the text. This approach is critical in maintaining the integrity of the text and avoiding reductionism or oversimplification.

[12] The application of social identity theory to the New Testament has generated significant results. Recent studies include those of: A. Kuecker (2011); P. A. Harland (2009); J. Brian Tucker (2010); Philip F. Esler, *Community and Gospel in Luke-Acts: The Social and Political Motivations of Lukan Theology* (SNTSMS, 57; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Philip F. Esler (1988); Philip F. Esler (2003); Bengt Holmberg & Mikael Winninge (2008); Minna Shkul (2009); Coleman A. Baker (2012:129–138).

[13] The use of narrative intertextuality to explicate common ancestry (Abraham as the father of all in Rom 4:16 and the grafting in of the nations in Rom 11) as a marker of differentiation and social group identity formation is also indicative of the nexus between intertextuality and social identity theory. Further, Paul's re-reading of Israel's Scriptural narrative and traditions in light of the gospel of Jesus Christ is construed to be a re-interpretation of a shared history that is salient to social identity construction and maintenance. The re-activation of a shared memory, such as the Exodus from Egypt by Isaiah and by Paul, connects the group with its past social identity for navigating the present existential crisis and is future-oriented.

This co-opting and reconfiguration in Christ did have some potential obstacles as the Judeans and the nations were binary opposites in the ancient world. The issues of circumcision and dietary food laws, functioning as religious, ethnic, and social identity markers of the people of God, posed a significant theological and social problem for the emerging community of Christ-followers. Despite the cosmic nature of the narrative, the co-opting is not at the expense of the nations' ethnic or cultural heritage and traditions since Paul adamantly resists the Judean requirement of circumcision and dietary restrictions as markers of the people of God. Paul is not dissolving ethnic markers for the Judean community; on the contrary he is advocating that the nations should remain non-Judean and not be forced to take on Judean ethnic markers. Effectively, Paul's stance is that ethnic markers no longer have any value in one's standing before the creator-God. It would be a serious misreading of Paul to assume that his refrain "there is no distinction" (Rom 3:22; 10:12) and his position of equality between Judeans and the nations meant that he was advocating jettisoning one's ethnic or cultural identity. Paul is not advocating a universal ethnic and/or cultural identity for Judean and non-Judean Christ-followers. His approach is particularistic in that he argues that the existing Judean and non-Judean social identities continue to peacefully co-exist within the Christ-movement (Rom 14:17-19) but are not to be obstacles to *becoming* or markers of *being* the people of God. He is not theologizing equality as sameness. Judeans and the nations are admonished to embrace each other equally while maintaining difference (Rom 14).[14] He is not denying the saliency[15] of Judean and non-Judean social identity; he is recategorizing their existing identities into a more inclusive one of participating and being "in Christ" and prioritizing this superordinate identity as more salient.[16]

Paul's approach is to separate the symbolic, social, and ethnic markers of faith from faith itself (the argument from Abraham in Rm. 4) so as to reconstitute the nascent Christ-followers into a community with its own social identity. This "deconstructed faith", apart from circumcision and the dietary ethnic markers codified by the law, of what it means to be righteous before God as exemplified in Abraham, becomes the old/new paradigm of faith. Once the markers are stripped away, the theological stage is set for reconfiguring the people of God in Christ. This theological reconstitution in Christ results in a new community of faith marked by identity descriptors or norms (Rom 12-15) with its own set of social experiences and expressions of faith particularized in a diversity of cultural and ethnic contexts.

In the face of widespread Judean rejection and the nations' acceptance of Christ's lordship and kingship and the division between Judean and non-Judean followers of Christ, Paul's task is to explicate the justification/righteousness of God by demonstrating that the inclusion of the nations into the people of God by faith *apart from ethnic identification markers* (circumcision and dietary restrictions) is not only continuous with the promises made to Abraham (Gen 12, 15, 22, Rom 4, 9-11) but proof positive that these promises are *being realized* in the present (Rom 11:11). The struggle to embrace and *include the "other" as they are* gains focus and clarity as Paul contextualizes it in the meta-narrative of the creator-God reconciling and renewing his creation.

[14] See William Campbell (2007).

[15] The concept of salience explains why one identity takes priority over another. Salience is defined as 'the conditions under which some specific group membership becomes cognitively prepotent in self-perception to act as the immediate influence on perception and behaviour' (Turner, 1987:54). The concept of salience is used to demonstrate the fluid nature of social identity since when one aspect of social identity becomes salient or prominent, other aspects become less salient (Turner, 1987:14)

[16] Tucker (2014:415) comments on the danger of eliminating subgroup identity: 'It is important to construct Christ-movement social identities in highly contextualized ways. This is one of the weaknesses of the universalistic approach to Paul's identity-forming work: the obliteration of existing subgroup identities runs the risk of reifying the dominant culture and ascribing to these, cultural norms with theological significance.' Haslam (2004:127-28) discovered that subgroup identities must first be validated as legitimate before groups are willing to negotiate a superordinate social identity. This increases the likelihood of cohesion and common goal achievement in the more inclusive group (Haslam, 2004:128). Haslam theorized that success in defusing a conflict situation is contingent not upon increasing the salience of the superordinate group identity "at the expense of the subgroup identity but in acknowledging and allowing expression of both superordinate and subgroup identities" (2004:127, emphasis original).

The *particularism of covenant* evidenced in the constructs of monotheism and election is framed against and re-interpreted in light of the *universal notion of God as the creator-God and humanity as his creation* in need of liberation. Paul carefully navigates the inherent tension between the *universality* of the gospel promise of a worldwide family and the *particularity* of that promise as applied to those who are Israel and those "other" than Israel. Paul's goal is not to undermine the particularism of Israel as it related to temple, Torah, circumcision, and dietary restrictions but to reject these markers as exclusive signifiers of being followers of Christ and the people of the creator-God.

I have conceptualized the sociological dimension, as a reconstituting of humanity in Abraham's seed, Jesus Christ (Rom 5:12-21; Gal 3:16). Abraham is intertextually invoked not only because he exemplifies faithful allegiance to the covenant- and creator-God, but because he is central to the very promises of incorporating the nations into a new creation family (Rom 4). Circumcision's role, as the signifier of hierarchical relationships and difference between those considered the people of God, Israel, and those "outside" of or "other" than the people of God, the nations, has come to an end in the gospel. Paul reshapes the sociological and corporate identity[17] of the people of God through differentiation from the Adam-group[18] and Roman imperial ideology. In order to do so, he must of necessity rewind the narrative of Israel and all humanity to the very beginning. Paul peels back the layers of ethnic and cultural identity to reveal the common outgroup identity of all humanity that is rooted in the Adam narrative.

The Adam narrative in Romans is the fundamental story of humanity. It is regarded as the central anthropological paradigm (Reinmuth, 2009:56). Paul triggers the intertext of creation as the point of reference by the phrase "since the creation of the world" (avpo. kti,sewj ko,smou - Rom 1:20). Humanity's rebellion and consequent failure to reflect the glory of God is construed in terms of the most primary of relationships, that between the creator-God and his creation. Paul construes sin in terms of a disruption in the relationship between creation (humanity) and the creator-God summarized as "fall[ing] short of the glory of God" (u`sterou/ntai th/j do,xhj tou/ qeou/ - 3:23). The volume of these intertextual echoes alerts the reader that the creation account of Genesis is the narrative precursor by which Romans 1:18-3:20 (and the rest of Romans) should be framed and read. The various depictions of humanity's rebellion against the creator-God in Romans reach back in numerous ways to the Adam story (1:19-32; 3:23; 5:12-21; 7:7-11).[19]

This Adamic outgroup identity is characterized as primarily being estranged from the life and glorious presence of the creator-God due to attitudes and acts of rebellion (Rom 3:23). It is against this Adam outgroup identity that Paul engages in the process of rhetorically re-constructing humanity's social identity in Christ (Rom 5-8) and elaborating an ethos (identity descriptors) that is congruent with this identity (Rom 12-16). Since humanity's social identity is shaped by Adam's

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[17] Paul is in the process of constructing the social identity of the Christ ingroup 'as that part of the individual's self-concept which derives from their knowledge of their membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership' (Tajfel, 1981:255).

[18] Paul's rhetorical discourse motivates a group identity differentiated from and other than the Adam outgroup so as 'to preserve psychological group distinctiveness (Esler, 2014:20).

[19] Biblical scholarship is divided as to who is in view in Romans 1:18-32. Authors who contend that Adam is in view in Romans 1 include James Dunn (1998:79-101), N.T. Wright (1993:19-40), Jonathan Linebaugh (2011:230-31), Morna Hooker (2009:298-303). N. J. Fitzmyer (1992:274) is representative of those who reject any allusion to Adam: he states, 'the alleged echoes of the Adam stories in Genesis are simply nonexistent. This interpretation reads too much of Genesis into the text.' Stanley Stowers (1994:86) states, 'Some contemporary scholars believe 1:18-32 to be constructed through allusions to the fall story in Genesis. These attempts are profoundly unconvincing.' Esler (2003:203) opposes the view that Adam is in view in Rom 1 and concludes that 'it is far-fetched to introduce Adam into the picture'. He appeals to the work of Joseph Fitzmyer (1992:149) in explaining the linguistic similarities and to Dale Martin (2006:52) that Romans 1 is concerned with the 'invention of idolatry and its consequences, not the Fall of Adam, and that a plurality of persons is in view in Romans 1 and not just one. Richard Longenecker (2016:212) takes a mediating position by the statement, 'Paul may have been thinking of Adam's fall in Genesis 3 when he wrote Rom 1:21-22, and so echoes of that Genesis account are to be found in his language of these verses.'

actions, Paul must portray the salvific actions of Christ as one, who like Adam, apocalyptically inaugurates and shapes the social identity of a renewed humanity (5:12-21; 8:28-30).

This intertextual allusion to Adam and creation is made explicit later in the Adam-Christ contrast (Rom 5:12-21), in a linking of Adam and Israel (Rom 7), and in the final cosmological renewal of all creation (Rom 8). The intertextual links between the Adam narrative and the story of Jesus Christ demonstrate anthropological significance. God's action in Christ, in rescuing humanity from the sin of Adam, now becomes the story of all humanity.

Human social identity[20] is defined by the second Adam, Jesus Christ, who came to rescue all of creation. No longer does Adam, sin, the fall, alienation, or the curse define humanity as it does in Genesis 3. Paul devotes considerable space in Romans to explicate the process of the nations' inclusion alongside Israel into the people of God as those re-configured in the person of Christ. They are summoned to *participate* in the Christ event by *pledging their allegiance to him as lord and king*. This is part of his calling as the apostle to the nations to be the primary shaper of *social and theological identity* of Christ-followers toward the formation of a community identity. Paul re-orders the social environment of Rome through the process of social categorization in identifying a new superordinate[21] group (prototypically embodied in Abraham, Rom 4) expressed by, "all who believe" (panti. tw/| pisteu,onti - Rom 1:16; 4:5; 10:4) in contradistinction to the Adam outgroup described as those who "fall short of the glory of God" (u`sterou/ntai th/j do,xhj tou/ qeou - 3:23). Re-reading Israel's Scriptures in the context of the Christ event and employing quotation, allusion, and echo, he engages in discourse to rhetorically define and shape the nature of this eschatological community of faith consisting of Israel and the nations.

The social and theological construct "all who believe" must be negotiated and renewed through discourse so as to deconstruct it from its preexisting ethnocentrism. This redrawing of social group boundaries must be skillfully executed so as to maintain the pre-existing sub-group identities. The tension between pre-existing cultural and ethnic identities and the new superordinate identity of "all who believe" must be carefully navigated to defuse conflict and to promote peaceful relationships. The "all who believe" group must be adept at living in a world of nested social identities where the salience of this group is prioritized above others.

Identity is formed *externally*, through differentiation from the Adam-group and Roman imperial ideology, through texts (Israel's Scriptures and Paul's letter) that communicate the beliefs and values associated with the Christ event, and *internally* through the eschatological Spirit (Rom 8). Paul's goal is that their social identification would be transformed from the Judean "we" and the nations "they" to a gospel-defined inclusive "we" without diluting socio-cultural and ethnic differences of both Israel and the nations.

Paul postulates that those who affirm their allegiance to the kingship and lordship of Christ are part of a new creation where old ethnic, racial, and gender distinctions do not affect one's standing before God (Gal 3:28; 6:14-15). Understanding one's new sociological identity, through participation in the Christ event, as part of a larger cosmic transformation is central to embodying

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[20] Social identity theory (SIT) was initially formulated by Henri Tajfel and his colleagues and published in the *European Journal of Social Psychology* in 1971. Social identity theory was conceptualized to explain discrimination between groups (Tajfel, 1978:1). Tajfel and his colleagues surfaced the persistent need for differentiation between social groups directed at preserving their distinctiveness even in the face of "increasing levels of communication and interdependence between groups" (Esler, 2014:15-16).

[21] Samuel Gaertner and his associates addressed the issue of how to reduce bias and conflict between groups. They proposed the strategy of 'recategorization' which is the process of redrawing the boundaries so that the members of two separate groups combine to form a new *superordinate* group (Gaertner, 1989:239, emphasis mine). The new superordinate ingroup identity that is formed does not 'necessarily require sub-groups to forsake their earlier characterizations entirely' (Gaertner, 1993:20). They posited that the most effective type of common ingroup would be those where "both the superordinate and the sub-group identities are salient, such as when the members conceive of themselves as *two sub-groups within a more inclusive superordinate entity'* (Gaertner, 1993:20, emphasis mine).

this narrative as a form of resistance to socio-political structures of empire and missional engagement where the name of Christ has not yet been proclaimed.

Paul engages in rhetorical discourse to define the identity of the superordinate group consisting of Israel and the nations as re-constituted in Christ. The inclusion of Israel and the nations into a superordinate family/group, a new creation, is rooted in: the ontological oneness of the creator-God and his purposes to renew humanity and the rest of creation (Rom 3:29-30), the liberating and self-sacrificial nature of the Christ event (3:24-31), baptism as the event that unites the Christ follower with Christ in his death and resurrection and inaugurates the new life in the Spirit (Rom 6), and the presence and leading of the eschatological Spirit in identifying those who are Christ followers (Rom 8). The incorporation of the nations is not merely a sociological patch to the division of humanity. The incorporation of the nations is part of the creator-God's cosmic purpose of inaugurating a renewed humanity through the death and resurrection of the Christ, the new prototype of humanity (8:29).

Conclusion

Paul's socio-rhetorical strategy consists of intertextually invoking Israel's Scriptures to frame the gospel, the revelation of the covenant justice of the creator-God, into an overarching narrative, new creation, in order to meet the socio-political exigencies of the Christ-movement in Rome and to establish Rome as a new base for his missional activity. The use of intertextuality and social identity theory has been helpful to surface and locate Paul's strategy in rooting his discourse regarding the socio-political identity of humanity by way of the construct of covenant to the creation and ultimate transformation of the cosmos. The sociological dimension to the renewal of creation does not eliminate ethnic or cultural distinctions but instead directly affirms them as significant to the ongoing purposes of the creator-God.

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