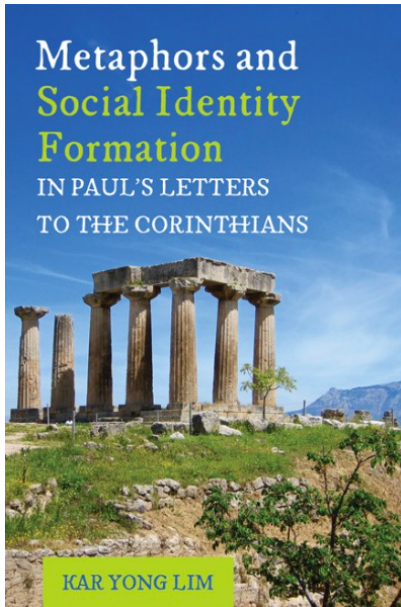


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Kar Yong Lim

Metaphors and Social Identity Formation in Paul's Letters to the Corinthians

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In *Metaphors and Social Identity Formation, in Paul's Letters to the Corinthians*, Kar Yong Lim seeks to investigate how Paul uses metaphors to build the social identity of the Corinthian community. Lim presents this study in the frame of a social-scientific study, at the intersection of metaphor and social-identity theory. From this frame, Lim seeks to investigate three primary questions: the question of Christian origins, how metaphor is used in communication, and the social relations of the Pauline community (xvi–xvii). As such, the work fits well into the ongoing scholarly discussion surrounding social-scientific approaches to identity formation in early Christianity and builds on the author's earlier work in identity formation in the Corinthian literature.

Within this broader scope, Lim focuses the research goal of the work to examining “how Paul attempted to create a distinctive social identity rooted in the gospel for the Christ-followers, by using a diverse range of metaphors in resolving the communal conflicts” (xix). To achieve this goal, Lim has divided the work into three parts, the first focusing on methodological framework, the second applying this framework to the Pauline metaphors, and the third synthesizing this within a social-identity context.

Lim begins in the first chapter by placing the methodology on Pauline metaphor within the scholarly context. According to Lim, most prior research has focused on linguistic

and interpretive issues with metaphor, such as that of G. B. Caird *Language and Imagery of the Bible* or David J. Williams's *Paul's Metaphors: Their Context and Character*. In contrast, Lim singles out two works for interaction: Raymond F. Collins's *The Power of Images in Paul*, for the "communicative effect" sustained by the Pauline metaphorical use (7); and Nijay K. Gupta's *Worship That Makes Sense to Paul*, for considering "the social dimension of Paul's community" in interpretation (7). Against the background of these two works, Lim subsequently provides a short overview of metaphor theory from Aristotle to Lakoff. Building on this brief overview, Lim suggests three helpful extra factors to the seven principles that Gupta outlines in his work. These three factors—social reality, (social) familiarity, and suppression and addition—build upon Gupta's seven within a sociocognitive metaphor frame. Thus, the metaphor aspect of this work is in many ways an extension of the earlier work from Gupta and Collins. While this methodological overview is appropriately brief, the section on cognitive metaphor theory (Lakoff and Johnson) could be expanded to provide a scholarly richness to the following investigation.

In the second chapter Lim introduces the other part of the theoretical framework: social-identity theory (SIT). In this chapter SIT is located within the sphere of social-science approaches to New Testament studies, beginning with Wayne Meeks's *First Urban Christians*. Here Lim seeks to trace a shift from "I" to "we," arguing for the appropriate application of SIT to the ancient world. Part of this involves a brief introduction to SIT itself, primarily focused on the core of the theory from Tajfel (1972) and Tajfel and Turner (1978). Notably, this introduction only briefly touches on the broader scope of social-identity approaches (SIA), only mentioning self-categorization theory in passing (34). The omission of Oakes's stereotype approach, Hornsey and Hogg's subgroup investigations, and Reicher and Sani's historical social-identity considerations are a lacuna in the methodological approach. Nevertheless, Lim does consider an often-overlooked aspect of SIA: that of the temporal aspects at play in the construction of social identity. Interacting with Condor and Cinnirella, Lim briefly sets forth the case for "demonstrat[ing] that temporal comparison could profitably be used in the investigation of social identity formation of the Corinthians" (36). This chapter is rounded out by a brief consideration of how social identity may have worked in the relevant period, drawing from the *Res gestae* and imperial politics. Throughout this chapter Lim interacts with relevant scholars in the intersection of social identity and biblical studies, such as Philip Esler, J. Brian Tucker, Judith Lieu, Kathy Ehresperger, and Warren Carter.

With the methodological approach to the work set out, Lim turns his attention to the Pauline use of metaphors within the Corinthian corpus. Chapter 3 focuses on the "Sibling Metaphor" (51), often framed as ἀδελφοί. Within this chapter Lim marshals a wide range of usage of the sibling metaphor to argue that its primary usage is in the context of

“divisions and conflicts of an unprecedented nature” (55). Similar to the methodology chapters, these investigations of specific metaphors contain a short overview of existing scholarship on the metaphor at hand, before launching into an examination of the metaphor itself in the ancient world. This examination of the metaphor in the ancient world is followed by a section addressing how the metaphor relates to social-identity formation. Here Lim presents a helpful examination of metaphor in the identity-formation context of voluntary associations, lawsuits, the supper ritual, and the Jerusalem collection. However, while this section is an apt social-scientific approach to the metaphorical usage, it is only minimally engaged with the social identity that Paul is seeking to generate and the self-categorization of the Corinthians. Indeed, the predominant engagement with SIT comes in a section just over one page long at the end of the chapter, as Lim considers how the metaphor is used to “consider their status in Christ and their new identity against groups that were outside their boundaries” (90). But even here the consideration is as a bifurcated group distinction—between insiders and outsiders—despite the Pauline usage of the metaphor conveying further nuance. Nevertheless, this chapter still represents a helpful social-scientific engagement with the sibling metaphor in the Corinthian discourse.

Chapter 4 continues the examination of Pauline metaphors, this time turning to the other familial metaphors within the Corinthian corpus. This chapter again starts with an overview of existing scholarship, then follows with an examination of the variety of familial metaphors in the ancient world. Here Lim considers the paterfamilial metaphor, relations between mothers and children, children and parents, and public uses of these metaphors. Similarly, the chapter continues to usefully look at the Pauline uses of each of these metaphorical categories with a social-scientific investigation of father, mother, child, and slave-administrator metaphorical uses. Finally, mirroring the previous chapter, this is rounded out with a consideration of how the uses of these metaphors serve the purpose of social-identity formation. This section provides a greater focus on social identity than the previous parallel, considering the Corinthian social comparison through the “Evaluative Dimension” (135) of the metaphor use. However, several aspects of this consideration are wanting, and further consideration of familial stereotype usage and social-category mobility would strengthen the outcome of this chapter.

Following this, chapter 5 considers the temple metaphor and departs from the pattern of the previous two chapters. In this chapter Lim shifts away from an assessment of existing scholarship and toward an examination of their social impact. Here he seeks to examine how “a member of the Christ-community, [would] have reacted and responded when the following [metaphors] were heard” (139). From this basis Lim assesses the notion of the metaphor usage as promoting a temple replacement mechanism and finds it wanting, ultimately concluding, “an understanding of temple-replacement theology operative in the

mind of gentile believers living under the shadow of the pagan temples would not only appear to be odd but also remote” (146). Stemming from this conclusion, Lim addresses the social-identity formation value of the metaphor, engaging in a longer discussion of the topic than the previous metaphors. However, here again the discussion is predominantly more general social-scientific engagement rather than specifically social identity.

Chapter 6 rounds out the metaphorical investigations, assessing the body metaphor as it is used “in addressing the abuse of spiritual gifts” (159). This chapter begins with an assessment of the contextual frame of the Pauline metaphorical use, before majoring on the ancient backgrounds for the metaphor. In the end, Lim concludes that “it is very unlikely that Paul could have drawn from the Hellenistic political and philosophical sources” (174). Instead, Lim contends that the metaphor draws from a health and well-being metaphor, as echoed in the cult of Asklepius and the writings of Galen. It is this use of the metaphor he then seeks to apply to the social-identity formation of the Corinthian community. This is again a social-scientific engagement, although one that provides ample resource for application to SIT.

The final chapter of Lim’s work—and the only chapter in part 3—seeks to further apply the social-scientific analysis of the prior metaphors to the nature of social-identity formation in the Corinthian letters. This chapter provides much of the social-identity impetus of the work, although even here it does not exert the incisive engagement with SIT that it promises.

Overall this work presents a robust social-scientific assessment of metaphorical usage in the Corinthian correspondence, and in this scope the volume admirably succeeds in its goal of looking at metaphor in the Corinthian corpus. However, overall the social-identity side of the promise is thin, despite the many promising avenues the book opens for further research. Nevertheless, the contributions Lim has made to the methodological framework for analysis of metaphor—building upon Gupta—helpfully extend the assessment of metaphor in a social-scientific frame. Further, this volume will undoubtedly provoke further investigation of metaphor use in identity formation in the Corinthian correspondence and elsewhere. This work is a valuable resource for anyone considering the social-scientific analysis of metaphors and their use in the Corinthian correspondence.