

# *Metaphors and Pragmatics: An Introduction to the Hermeneutics of Metaphors in the Epistle to the Ephesians*

GERALD A. KLINGBEIL

ADVENTIST INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF ADVANCED STUDIES  
SILANG, CAVITE, PHILIPPINES

*This article seeks first to understand recent methodological discussions in metaphor research in the context of biblical and theological studies. Metaphors are complex literary devices that require familiarity with the world view and historical context of the respective author of a particular ancient text and also communicate on an experiential level. The multiplicity and polyvalence of metaphors together with their ability to create tension requiring reorientation make them ideal rhetorical tools. In this sense metaphors connect perfectly with pragmatics, which does not focus upon form, significance, sounds, or structure but, rather, upon the strategies that authors employ to communicate effectively. Based upon these considerations, a metaphor map of the Epistle to the Ephesians is drawn, recognizing ten main metaphors with many more connected submetaphors. Finally, the study presents a concise evaluation of the metaphor map, focusing upon authorial strategies and the main metaphorical components such as “family,” “body,” and “position.”*

*Key Words:* hermeneutics, metaphor, pragmatics, Epistle to the Ephesians, family, body, position, hierarchy

## INTRODUCTION: OF METAPHORS AND PRAGMATICS

In the following article, I will focus upon two important elements that have featured prominently in the recent discussion of hermeneutics in general—and more particularly—in Pauline hermeneutics:<sup>1</sup> that is, the

---

*Author's note:* This study has been financed by a research grant provided by River Plate Adventist University during 2004 and is part and parcel of a large-scale research project entitled: “La iglesia, cuerpo de Cristo y plenitud de Dios (The Church, Body of Christ and Fullness of God),” involving 5 distinct research groups with some 15 specialists of distinct theological specializations, under the leadership of Dr. Mario Veloso.

1. A brief but comprehensive review of recent currents in Pauline hermeneutics can be found in Grant R. Osborne, “Hermeneutics/Interpreting Paul,” in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* (ed. Gerald F. Hawthorne and Ralph P. Martin; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993), 388–97. Parallel to the development in general biblical hermeneutics, Pauline hermeneutics have seen a tremendous methodological change away from the primary traditional focus (i.e., “the

characteristics and functions of metaphors and the importance of pragmatics in the hermeneutical process.<sup>2</sup> Focusing upon the Epistle to the Ephesians, I will attempt to “draw” a metaphorical map of the letter, resulting in a comprehensive list of the metaphors used. This will be followed by a discussion of the pragmatic force (and reason) for using these metaphors and particularly their important interaction. Clearly, this is just a pilot project, since any suggestion to interact adequately with the included metaphors of a complete NT epistle would be presumptuous. However, it is hoped that the approach taken here will provide an impetus for more systematic studies in this particular field.

### TRYING TO UNDERSTAND A HERMENEUTICAL DEVICE: METAPHORS

The study of metaphors and symbols is an important field in biblical and theological studies, since without access to these ciphers it is nearly impossible for the modern exegete satisfactorily to understand and read biblical texts using these elements. Metaphors and symbols<sup>3</sup> have been discussed

author’s intended meaning”) via a nearly exclusive textual focus (i.e., semiotics) to a reader-centered hermeneutics (i.e., postmodern hermeneutical theories). In the view of the present author all three elements—namely author, text, and modern reader—should be taken into consideration if an adequate understanding of the meaning of the text is to be reached. The sole focus upon one element is not sufficient and will result in warped results. Therefore, the focus upon metaphors (contained in the text) and pragmatics (the communication strategy affecting the audience, both ancient as well as modern) will hopefully contribute to a more balanced hermeneutics.

2. The hermeneutical endeavor often requires a look over the proverbial fence into the fields of other disciplines. The multidisciplinary focus, however, does not suggest a dismissal of the traditional historical-grammatical (and theological) hermeneutics favored by historical Christianity, but rather should be understood as complementary. For a more in-depth discussion of this issue, including weaknesses and strengths of distinct disciplines that could be helpful in this regard (such as literary analysis, archaeology, comparative textual evidence, sociology, and anthropology), see Gerald A. Klingbeil and Martin G. Klingbeil, “La lectura de la Biblia desde una perspectiva hermenéutica multidisciplinaria (I)—consideraciones teóricas preliminares,” in *Entender la Palabra: Hermenéutica adventista para el nuevo siglo* (ed. Merling Alomía et al.; Cochabamba: Universidad Adventista de Bolivia, 2000), 147–73.

3. *Metaphors*: see here, for example, Stephen Bigger, “Symbol and Metaphor in the Hebrew Bible,” in *Creating the Old Testament: The Emergence of the Hebrew Bible* (ed. Stephen Bigger; Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), 51–80; Howard Eilberg-Schwartz, “Israel in the Mirror of Nature: Animal Metaphors in the Ritual and Narrative of Ancient Israel,” *JRitSt* 2 (1988): 1–30; U. Rütterswörden, “Erwägungen zur Metaphorik des Wassers in Jes 40ff,” *SJOT* 2 (1989): 1–22; Willem A. VanGemeren, “Prophets, the Freedom of God, and Hermeneutics,” *WTJ* 52 (1990): 79–99, and particularly 96. Brigitte Seifert, *Metaphorisches Reden von Gott im Hoseabuch* (FRLANT 166; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996), 11–86; Elna Mouton, “The Communicative Power of the Epistle to the Ephesians,” in *Rhetoric, Scripture and Theology: Essays from the 1994 Pretoria Conference* (ed. Stanley E. Porter and Thomas H. Olbricht; JSNTSup 131; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 280–307; Marc Zvi Brettler, “Incompatible Metaphors for YHWH in Isaiah 40–66,” *JSOT* 78 (1998): 97–120; Samuel Terrien, “The Metaphor of the Rock in Biblical Theology,” in *God in the Fray: A Tribute to Walter Brueggemann* (ed. Timothy K. Beal and Tod Linafelt; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998), 157–71; Martin G. Klingbeil, *Yahweh Fighting from Heaven: God as Warrior and as God of Heaven in the Hebrew Psalter and Ancient Near Eastern Iconography* (OBO 169;

prolifically in the past two decades in biblical hermeneutics, and with good reasons, since their understanding is required if one would like to understand the biblical text adequately. Besides the more or less frequent (but extremely brief!) reference to metaphors in general introductions to hermeneutics,<sup>4</sup> there have been several recent important contributions in biblical studies that deal not only with metaphors per se but also with the hermeneutics of their interpretation. The five examples chosen for this concise review cover a wide spectrum and come from the realm of OT metaphor research (Seifert and Klingbeil), the interaction between metaphor in a text and image/iconography (Klingbeil), the metaphors of Ephesians (Mouton), and the function of metaphors in the larger context of hermeneutics (Paul and Aaron). Unfortunately, I did not have access to the book by Gregory W. Dawes, *The Body in Question: Metaphor and Meaning in the Interpretation of Ephesians 5:21–33*, due to its unavailability in the local library. Davies includes a substantial section on metaphor theory on the general level, and more particularly, in Ephesians.<sup>5</sup>

Brigitte Seifert published her dissertation on metaphorical language about God in the book of Hosea in 1996. This grew out of her realization that “metaphors seem to be especially well suited to make the message of

Fribourg: University Press / Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1999), 9–28; Andrew Dearman, “YHWH’s House: Gender Roles and Metaphors for Israel in Hosea,” *JNSL* 25 (1999): 97–108; Ian Paul, “Metaphor and Exegesis,” in *After Pentecost: Language and Biblical Interpretation* (ed. Craig G. Bartholomew et al.; The Scripture and Hermeneutics Series 2; Grand Rapids: Zondervan / Carlisle: Paternoster, 2001), 387–402; David H. Aaron, *Biblical Ambiguities, Metaphor Semantics and Divine Imagery* (Brill Reference Library of Ancient Judaism 4; Leiden: Brill, 2001); J. Gordon McConville, “Metaphor, Symbol and the Interpretation of Deuteronomy,” in *After Pentecost: Language and Biblical Interpretation* (ed. Craig G. Bartholomew et al.; The Scripture and Hermeneutics Series 2; Grand Rapids: Zondervan / Carlisle: Paternoster, 2001), 329–51.

*Symbols*: T. Fawcett, *The Symbolic Language of Religion: An Introductory Study* (London: SCM, 1970); R. Firth, *Symbols: Public and Private* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1973); Lothar Rupert, “Symbole im Alten Testament,” in *Freude am Gottesdienst: Aspekte ursprünglicher Liturgie* (ed. Josef Schreiner; Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1983), 93–105; E. Thomas Lawson and Robert N. McCauley, *Rethinking Religion: Connecting Cognition and Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

4. See here the brief introductions in the context of biblical hermeneutics including Peter Cotterell and Max Turner, *Linguistics and Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1989), 299–302; Moisés Silva, *Biblical Words and Their Meaning: An Introduction to Lexical Semantics* (rev. ed.; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 78, 84–85 (where the author suggests that metaphors are a stylistic means to achieve “semantic change”); Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1991), 227–30, 299–303; and also Walter C. Kaiser Jr. and Moisés Silva, *An Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics: The Search for Meaning* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 93–94.

5. Gregory W. Dawes, *The Body in Question: Metaphor and Meaning in the Interpretation of Ephesians 5:21–33* (Biblical Interpretation 30; Leiden: Brill, 1998). According to the review of the work by Keith Burton (review of Gregory W. Dawes, *The Body in Question: Metaphor and Meaning in the Interpretation of Ephesians 5:21–33*, in *AUSS* 37 [1999]: 103–5), Dawes dedicates a substantial space to the discussion of metaphors (pp. 25–78), although the main thrust of his discussion focuses upon the larger issue concerning male headship and female subordination in the NT.

God understandable for modern human audiences.”<sup>6</sup> After providing a good review of current metaphor theory, covering the important contributions of Paul Ricoeur and Eberhard Jüngel,<sup>7</sup> she focuses upon the theory of theological metaphor, distinguishing between metaphor, symbol, allegory, and analogy,<sup>8</sup> Seifert suggests that a metaphor is the verbal form of analogy<sup>9</sup> and that it is not always “touchable” or “describable” in terms of the modern scientific paradigm.<sup>10</sup> The possibility of using and understanding metaphors about God implies a certain “intimacy”<sup>11</sup> with God. In other words, metaphors about God used in Scripture need to be read against the background of faith and the recognition of revelation. While metaphor as a literary device deals in language as its “currency,” theological metaphor deals in theology—that is, a reality outside our limited, “earth-bound” existence. Seifert’s work is commendable and provides a good review of what is happening regarding theological metaphors. The challenge that she leaves with the potential interpreter of metaphors about God or involving God in Scripture is (a) a needed intimacy or experimental knowledge of God and (b) the realization that talking about God always is limited and bound to specific concepts whose transfer may or may not provide new insight into his nature. In other words, a particular metaphor will not tell the entire story but needs to be integrated into the larger metaphorical “map” of Scripture.

Martin G. Klingbeil published his revised doctoral dissertation in 1999, focusing upon the divine warrior metaphor (including the God of Heaven metaphor) in the Psalms. He includes a helpful introduction to metaphor theory<sup>12</sup> with pertinent bibliography. Klingbeil posits metaphor in both the semantic and the pragmatic fields, suggesting that in order to understand a given metaphor one needs to understand the meaning of the term (both original and “shifted”) as well as its reception in a given cul-

6. Seifert, *Metaphorisches Reden*, 5.

7. *Ibid.*, 33–37, 45–50. Ricoeur suggests that metaphors not only represent a semantic change or innovation but actually by means of language structure express and “realize” new realities. Jüngel looks at metaphors from the systematic-theological angle, whereby the metaphor (as part of the basic structure of language) connects two distinct horizons of reality. By means of a dialectic (connecting the “known” with the “unknown”) the new content of the Christian *kerygma* can be described.

8. Seifert, *Metaphorisches Reden*, 60–75.

9. *Ibid.*, 75.

10. “Wer das durch empirische Wissenschaft Erforschbare zur Norm für Wirklichkeit überhaupt erhebt, wird schon bei solchen Metaphern hilflos sein, die menschliche Grunderfahrungen wie Liebe und Leid, Glück oder Angst benennen, erst recht bei Metaphern für Gott” (*ibid.*, 76).

11. German “Vertrautheit” (*ibid.*, 77).

12. Klingbeil, *Yahweh Fighting from Heaven*, 9–28. Compare also an updated concise version in Martin G. Klingbeil, “De lo profundo, Jehová, a ti clamo: Conocer al Dios de Israel a través del himnario veterotestamentario,” in *Pensar la iglesia hoy: Hacia una eclesiología adventista. Estudios teológicos presentados durante el IV Simposio Bíblico Teológico Sudamericano en honor a Raoul Dederen* (ed. Gerald A. Klingbeil et al.; Libertador San Martín: Editorial Universidad Adventista del Plata, 2002), 45–48.

tural context (covering the pragmatic aspect).<sup>13</sup> He opts for an “intermediate theory of metaphor”<sup>14</sup> which suggests that metaphors are more than the sum of their literal descriptions and are connected to the represented reality and the context (of both metaphor and communicator). In other words, metaphors cannot only be understood by interpreting the individual elements but together form a new “literary being” that needs to be recognized. In this way, an author can imbue new aspects into a well-known metaphor. A good example can be found in the meal metaphors (“eating” and “drinking”) of the book of Revelation.<sup>15</sup> While many metaphorical references to “eating” and “drinking” in Revelation occur in a positive context (e.g., Rev 2:7; 3:20; 19:9) there are a marked number of negative applications that invert the positive aspect of the communal meal—often in judicial (= judgment) contexts (Rev 2:14, 20; 17:16; 19:18; etc.). While Klingbeil focuses upon metaphors of God, his classification and underlying metaphor theory are helpful to decipher other metaphors in biblical texts. He places the metaphor away from the sphere of mere semantics<sup>16</sup> into the much broader context of pragmatics, which takes into account the way the ancient and modern reader (or listener) perceives and associates a specific term or concept in his/her different social and cultural context.<sup>17</sup>

Elna Mouton is Associate Professor of New Testament Studies at the University of Stellenbosch in South Africa.<sup>18</sup> In her study dealing with communicative power and the rhetoric of persuasion in the Epistle to the Ephesians,<sup>19</sup> Mouton first suggests that the genre of the Letter to the Ephesians is an epistle, considered for public reading, although it includes additional embedded genres, such as prayers and songs.<sup>20</sup> Basing her work on a study by Hendrix, she suggests that

13. Klingbeil, *Yahweh Fighting from Heaven*, 12–14.

14. *Ibid.*, 15–16, over against the *literal substitution theory* (where each metaphor can be explained by literal descriptions) and the *universal theory of metaphors* (which sees metaphors as standard part and parcel of our conceptual system).

15. See my “‘Eating’ and ‘Drinking’ in the Book of Revelation: A Study of New Testament Thought and Theology,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 16 (2005): 75–92.

16. This reminds one of Silva (*Biblical Words and Their Meaning*, 84–85) and his rather mechanical definition of metaphors as techniques resulting in “semantic change.”

17. A good introduction to the neglected field of pragmatics in biblical studies can be found in Chantal J. Klingbeil, “Mirando más allá de las palabras: Pragmática lingüística y su aplicación a los estudios bíblicos,” in *Entender la Palabra: Hermenéutica Adventista para el Nuevo Siglo* (ed. Merling Alomía et al.; Cochabamba: Universidad Adventista de Bolivia, 2000), 123–35. Compare also Archibald L. H. M. van Wieringen, “The Reader in Genesis 22:1–19. Textsyntax–Textsemantics–Textpragmatics,” *EstBib* 53 (1995): 289–304. A general introduction to the important topic from an extrabiblical perspective can be found in Jens S. Allwood, *Linguistic Communication as Action and Cooperation: A Study in Pragmatics* (Gothenburg Monographs in Linguistic 2; Gothenburg: University of Gothenburg, Department of Linguistics, 1976). See for more bibliographical references the following section of this article.

18. When the article under consideration was published she was lecturer in the Department of Biblical and Religious Studies at the University of Port Elizabeth, South Africa.

19. Mouton, “The Communicative Power,” 280–307.

20. *Ibid.*, 284.

[u]nderstanding the Ephesians document as an honorific decree . . . , in my opinion, illuminates its overwhelming emphasis on different, rather unique, aspects: Christ's lordship and his and the implied recipients' exalted position of power (1:10, 19–23; 2:5, 6); the heavenly dimension of the readers' new status (1:3, 20; 2:6; 3:10; 6:12; . . .); the document's alternative ethos of praise-giving (1:6, 12, 14; 3:20–21; 5:20), unity (4:1–16) and mutual respect/submission (5:21) associated with those who believed that what he did was for their benefit (1:19; 5:25).<sup>21</sup>

However, ancient honorific decrees were not only another literary genre that was esthetically pleasing but sought to communicate effectively and persuade the audience. Thus—according to Mouton—the prime driving force behind the literary design was questions of communication rather than necessarily issues of content. Concerning the metaphorical language of Ephesians and based on Ricoeur's and McFague's earlier works, Mouton suggests that one of the most significant abilities of the human mind is its image-making capacity that can associate, connect, disassociate, disconnect, orient, or reorient itself constantly. Metaphors can communicate these processes<sup>22</sup> and even more so, can also initiate these processes in the readers. In consequence the inclusion of metaphors represents one of the major strategies in a carefully crafted and highly rhetorical literary layout (of any ancient and modern text). Due to the rather limited nature of Mouton's study, no precise metaphor theory is developed although it should be recognized that the author interacts intelligently with important literature on the subject. After all, she has only 27 pages for a complex discussion that does not primarily focus upon metaphors in the Epistle to the Ephesians but is first and foremost interested in successful communication/rhetorical strategies. However, her emphasis upon the delicate tension among identification, alienation, and reorientation as a result of the reading process focusing upon metaphorical language is important and needs to be taken into consideration.

Another important effort discussing metaphor in the context of biblical interpretation appeared in a new series, published by Zondervan and entitled *Scripture and Hermeneutics*, which focuses upon the theoretical and linguistic underpinnings of 21st-century hermeneutics, seeking to be faithful (in the true sense of "faith") to the claims of the biblical texts. Ian Paul in his discussion of metaphor and exegesis takes as his point of departure the often difficult to comprehend nature of metaphors in biblical texts and hymns.<sup>23</sup> After providing a brief historical overview of metaphor

21. *Ibid.*, 288–89.

22. She refers here to the processes of orientation, disorientation and reorientation, identification and estrangement, association and disassociation (*ibid.*, 293).

23. Paul, "Metaphor and Exegesis," 387–88. Interestingly, Klingbeil, "De lo profundo Jehová, a ti clamo," also focuses upon hymns and hymnology in the context of metaphors, which—being poetry—lend themselves to the employment of metaphors.

theory in philosophical thought, Paul quotes Kant's distinction between useful ("scientific") and esthetic ("literary") categories of knowledge. Clearly (at least for Kant), metaphor falls into the latter category.<sup>24</sup> Paul basically adopts Ricoeur's theory of metaphor which understands the metaphor as the expression of the fullness of human existence. Thus, by formulating a metaphor and observing the process of that formulation and its interpretive changes in history, people understand more about themselves.<sup>25</sup> The very imprecise nature of metaphors,<sup>26</sup> transmitting more than is visible on the mere surface, is important in this imaginative process, which in turn provides new cognitive space (= space to understand) for the reader. In conclusion Paul formulates two important aspects of the exegesis of metaphors in biblical studies: (1) the importance of diachronic analysis of language and (2) the recognition of the "semantic impertinence of metaphors."<sup>27</sup>

The final important theoretical contribution, entitled *Biblical Ambiguities, Metaphor Semantics and Divine Imagery*, was published in 2001 in the Brill Reference Library of Ancient Judaism series.<sup>28</sup> Aaron's main concern is parallel to Klingbeil's and focuses upon the biblical metaphorical language about God. While Klingbeil studies mainly the iconographical comparative material from the ancient Near East, Aaron seeks to elucidate the linguistic characteristics of figurative language. Aaron does not suggest an ahistorical reading of the biblical text—something quite fashionable in recent literary or narrative studies. For him, the understanding of the metaphor involves not only the reader's perspective but also the perspective of the author and the specific historical context.<sup>29</sup> Aaron suggests that one of the main characteristics of any metaphor is its ambiguity, that is, its openness to varied interpretations and associations.<sup>30</sup> He dedicates a very helpful chapter to the discussion of metaphors and nonmetaphors in the biblical text.<sup>31</sup> However, the most technical discussion of a metaphor can be found in ch. 6 and emphasizes—in our present context—two relevant observations:<sup>32</sup> First, biblical metaphors about God cannot always be

24. Paul, "Metaphor and Exegesis," 389–90.

25. "The creation of metaphor in language thus stands at the furthest point of the 'long path' or 'detour' through hermeneutics by which the self gains self-understanding by understanding the world around" (*ibid.*, 391).

26. Paul calls this the "semantic impertinence" (*ibid.*, 393).

27. *Ibid.*, 394–96. It should be noted that Paul is not interested in a general diachronic study of literature, which is more the domain of general critical method, but rather in the specific diachronic study of language and its use. Some interesting applications of Ricoeur's theoretical framework to exegetical studies can be found in Elmer B. Smick, "Semeiological Interpretation of the Book of Job," *WTJ* 48 (1986): 135–49; Kevin J. Vanhoozer, "A Lamp in the Labyrinth: The Hermeneutics of 'Aesthetic' Theology," *TJ* 8 (1987): 25–56; *idem*, *Biblical Narrative in the Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

28. Aaron, *Biblical Ambiguities, Metaphor Semantics and Divine Imagery*.

29. *Ibid.*, 4–6.

30. *Ibid.*, 5–15.

31. *Ibid.*, 23–42.

32. *Ibid.*, 101–24.

explained in clear-cut binary terms, that is, distinguishing readily and easily between the literal and the figurative (or metaphorical). In Aaron's opinion, the world view of the ancient authors was more characterized by some type of *continuum* than by straightforward distinctions. Second, as resulting from his suggestion of the *continuum* involving distinct grades of metaphorical meaning, the perception of the world view of the biblical author becomes an urgent necessity if one would like to grasp the meaning of the employed metaphor(s).

Summarizing this brief review of recent discussions of metaphors in the context of biblical hermeneutics, we can make the following points: (1) Metaphors are a much more complex literary device than understood earlier and need to be read by looking simultaneously at meaning and usage.<sup>33</sup> (2) Metaphors in theological texts (especially when talking about God) presuppose not only rationality but also an experimental response (= faith) to that metaphor if to be understood adequately. (3) The understanding of metaphors presumes a thorough knowledge of the author's cultural, social, and contextual circumstances and his/her world view. (4) Metaphors lend themselves to a multiplicity of meanings, which makes a fruitful intertextual (= use and reuse of motifs in different biblical books separated by time and/or geography) usage more probable. (5) Due to the polyvalence of metaphors, tensions can arise in the (ancient and modern) reader, who sometimes can identify with the metaphor or may feel alienated/estranged, requiring a reorientation of an earlier position. In this sense metaphors are important rhetorical tools.

The attempt to understand adequately the many metaphors employed in the Epistle to the Ephesians requires a solid theory of metaphor, and the five points mentioned above should be considered a basic and helpful point of departure. Far from being mere coincidence, the metaphorical language of the author of Ephesians<sup>34</sup> seems to have been chosen as the ideal vehicle for his main theological themes, since metaphor enabled him to communicate effectively and "persuade" (in rhetorical terms) his intended audience. Pragmatics as a subdiscipline of hermeneutics pays particular attention to this communication process and, thus, can provide helpful data when one looks at the larger issue of metaphors in the Epistle to the Ephesians.

33. This corresponds to the categories of semantics and pragmatics.

34. There is a vast amount of literature on the subject. Modern scholarship seems to lean toward a more negative evaluation of the traditional Pauline authorship of the epistle. For a concise and up-to-date article, see Clinton E. Arnold, "Ephesians, Letter to the," in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* (ed. Gerald F. Hawthorne and Ralph P. Martin; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993), 238–49. Harold W. Hoehner (*Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002], 2–61) has provided a very detailed discussion of the relevant arguments, including also a comprehensive evaluation of the authorship debate from Erasmus to the latest commentaries published in 2001. It is interesting to note in his chart (p. 19) that in the 38 commentaries published between 1991 and 2001, 50% of the commentators consider the epistle as genuinely Pauline while the other half doubts that fact. Having reviewed the evidence provided by the specialists, I assume Pauline authorship in this study.

## PRAGMATICS AND HERMENEUTICS

Modern linguistics and communication experts speak of pragmatics and communication models that need to be taken into consideration if one wants to communicate effectively.<sup>35</sup> It is clear that pragmatics—albeit not always labeled that way and properly understood—is of the utmost importance for everyone who wants to understand *and* convey the Good News in a successful manner. Quite clearly, the biblical authors also had this goal in mind when they tried to communicate their divinely inspired message (2 Tim 3:16) to their respective audiences and thus used every possible literary device that would be helpful in fulfilling this ideal. There is a growing corpus of studies focusing upon pragmatics in the context of NT studies,<sup>36</sup> which is an indication of the importance and relevance of the issue. In the following I will present the basic concepts of linguistic pragmatics, which will then be integrated into the larger task at hand—that is, the deciphering and understanding of the metaphor cluster in the Epistle to the Ephesians.

Similar to real-life spoken communication, written texts contain more than content. On a linguistic level one can distinguish between morphology (the forms of the language), semantics (the meaning of the individual terms), and syntax (the interaction of terms on the sentence level). To this one could add another level, generally known as discourse analysis, which involves the intent to understand a sequence of sentences resulting in a complete text. As pointed out by Walter Bodine, “in discourse there is a linguistic entity that is greater than any distilled, logical summary sentence and also greater than only the sequence of sentences that make up the discourse.”<sup>37</sup> While semantics responds to the question “what does X

35. For a helpful introduction to the issue of pragmatics in the context of biblical interpretation, see Klingbeil, “Mirando más allá de las palabras,” 123–35; and also Horacio Simian-Yofre, “Pragmalingüística: Comunicación y exégesis,” *RevistB* 50 (1988): 75–95. For a discussion of particular elements of pragmatics that are important for translators, see James K. Waters, “Contrastive Discourse Pragmatics and Translation with Implications for Training,” *BT* 51 (2000): 124–34. Waters suggests that modern Bible translators need to be able to recognize discourse level linguistic features of their own languages that may be carried over subconsciously into the receptor language. Cristo H. J. van der Merwe (“From Paradigms to Texts: New Horizons and New Tools for Interpreting the Old Testament,” *JNSL* 22 [1996]: 167–79) has called for acknowledgement and integration of pragmatics in the teaching of Biblical Hebrew. A similar call, however more detailed, has recently been made by William M. Schniedewind, “Prolegomena for the Sociolinguistics of Classical Hebrew,” *Journal of Hebrew Scriptures* 5 (2004) [<http://www.jhsonline.org> and <http://purl.org/jhs>]. An interesting application of pragmatics in exegetical studies can be found in van Wieringen, “The Reader in Genesis 22:1–19,” 289–304.

36. See here, for example, Joop F. M. Smit, “‘What Is Apollos? What Is Paul?’ In Search for the Coherence of First Corinthians 1:10–4:21?” *NovT* 44 (2002): 231–51; John Paul Heil, “The Narrative Strategy and Pragmatics of the Temple Theme in Mark,” *CBQ* 59 (1997): 76–100; Ernst R. Wendland, “Finding Some Lost Aspects of Meaning in Christ’s Parables of the Lost—and Found (Luke 15),” *TJ* 17 (1996): 19–65; Andrew Wilson, “The Pragmatics of Politeness and Pauline Epistolography: A Case Study of the Letter of Philemon,” *JSNT* 48 (1992): 107–19.

37. Walter R. Bodine, “Introduction: Discourse Analysis of Biblical Literature—What It Is and What It Offers,” in *Discourse Analysis of Biblical Literature* (ed. Walter R. Bodine; SBL Semeia

mean?" pragmatics tries to answer the question "what would you like to say with X?" A good definition of the concept is suggested by Thomas: "Pragmatics is the place where a speaker's knowledge of grammar comes into contact with his/her knowledge of the world."<sup>38</sup> This means practically that pragmatics cannot be studied isolated from the social, intellectual, cultural, and religious context of both the reader and the original author. Sociolinguistic research adds an important element to pragmatics, since it is interested in the illocutionary force of a particular statement. While this can be better done in currently spoken language research, it is also helpful for written languages, as in the case of Scripture. Important elements in this regard are the particular context, tone or mood of expression, as well as meaningful factors of nonverbal communication. As indicated by Chantal Klingbeil, the simple phrase "there is a dog in the room" carries more than mere information. It can be an urgent warning or a promise (if intended as a surprise for a child, for example) or it could represent a threat.<sup>39</sup> Sociopragmatic failure stems from cross-culturally different perceptions of what constitutes appropriate linguistic behavior.<sup>40</sup> In other words if one would like to understand the exact meaning of a certain phrase, particularly a phrase originating in a distinct cultural and historical context (as is the case with Scripture), understanding must endeavor to go beyond the literal meaning.<sup>41</sup> A good example can be found in 2 Kgs

---

Studies; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995), 3. The literature on discourse analysis is vast and growing. For good introductions, see Kevin J. Vanhoozer, "From Speech Acts to Scripture Acts: The Covenant of Discourse and Discourse of Covenant," in *After Pentecost: Language and Biblical Interpretation* (ed. Craig G. Bartholomew et al.; Scripture and Hermeneutics Series 2; Grand Rapids: Zondervan / Carlisle: Paternoster, 2001), 1–49; Hilaire Paul Valiquette, "Exodus–Deuteronomy as Discourse: Models, Distancing, Provocation, Paraenesis," *JSTOT* 85 (1999): 47–70; Luis Vegas Montaner, "Sintaxis del verbo hebreo bíblico: Nuevas tendencias," in *Jewish Studies at the Turn of the Twentieth Century: Proceedings of the 6th EAJS Congress, Toledo, July 1988, Volume I: Biblical, Rabbinical, and Medieval Studies* (ed. Judit Targarona Borrás and Angel Sáenz-Badillos; Leiden: Brill, 1999), 221–31; Ernst Wendland, "Recursion and Variation in the 'Prophecy' of Jonah: On the Rhetorical Impact of Stylistic Technique in Hebrew Narrative Discourse, with Special Reference to Irony and Enigma," *AUISS* 35 (1997): 189–209; Jeffrey T. Reed, "Discourse Analysis as New Testament Hermeneutic: A Retrospective and Prospective Appraisal," *JETS* 39 (1996): 223–40; K. E. Lowery, "Bibliography: A Classified Discourse Analysis Bibliography," in *Discourse Analysis of Biblical Literature* (ed. Walter R. Bodine; SBL Semeia Studies; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995), 213–53; and K. E. Lowery, "The Theoretical Foundations of Hebrew Discourse Grammar," in *Discourse Analysis of Biblical Literature* (ed. Walter R. Bodine; SBL Semeia Studies; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995), 103–30; as well as the many studies in this edited volume: Robert D. Bergen, ed., *Biblical Hebrew and Discourse Linguistics* (Dallas: Summer Institute of Linguistics, 1994). Due to my main research interests and specializations the references pertain predominantly to the field of OT studies. However, while the language differs (Hebrew versus Greek), the model and method remain the same.

38. J. Thomas, "Cross-Cultural Pragmatic Failure," *Applied Linguistics* 4/2 (1983): 99.

39. Klingbeil, "Pragmática lingüística," 127.

40. See here Thomas, "Cross-Cultural Pragmatic Failure," 99.

41. Writes T. Desmond Alexander: "Students need to be taught about ancient Near Eastern literary conventions and styles. They need to appreciate that documents, written over two thousand years ago in a culture far removed from our own, cannot be simply read as modern

4:26, where the Sunnamite woman, grief stricken and with an obviously heavy heart, responds to the question of Gehazi, the servant of Elisha: הַשְׁלוֹם לְךָ 'how are you doing?'<sup>42</sup> with the seemingly untruthful statement: שְׁלוֹם 'peace'. Judging from her subsequent action of taking hold of the feet of the prophet of YHWH (in itself a taboo), nothing is well with her and she definitely does not express peace. However, understood as a customary and formulary greeting, the response makes more sense.<sup>43</sup> As this example has shown, a superficial translation and reading of a text, far removed from our present reality, will result in a distorted understanding.<sup>44</sup>

What is the importance of pragmatics for our understanding of the metaphors of the Epistle of the Ephesians? First, we are reminded not to transfer immediately our modern (or Western) concept of the particular metaphor on a one-to-one basis. Second, we are challenged to look at the entire epistle and not only isolated sections or individual metaphors.<sup>45</sup> Third, the fact that the author of Ephesians employed a high number of metaphors to communicate effectively needs to be recognized and correctly understood as a conscious communication strategy. Fourth, thinking in terms of the original mode of delivery, visualizing orality should be a helpful tool when trying to decipher Ephesians' contents. Since most NT (as well as OT) canonical books were first intended to be heard instead of being read, the oral element is significant.<sup>46</sup> This is also confirmed by Harry Gamble, who states,

---

short stories. We have to understand the culture(s) and world view(s) of the ancient writer, insofar as that is possible." See T. Desmond Alexander, "A Religious Book in a Secular University," in *Make the Old Testament Live: From Curriculum to Classroom* (ed. Richard S. Hess and Gordon J. Wenham; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 98.

42. Literally the translation is: 'Is there peace for you?'

43. See for more details my "'Asir los pies': 2 Reyes 4:27 y el lenguaje idiomático en el Antiguo Testamento," *Theo* 12 (1997): 2-15, esp. 7.

44. A helpful introduction to the issue can be found in Mildred L. Larson, *Meaning-Based Translation: A Guide to Cross-Language Equivalence* (2nd ed.; Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1998). The questions and issues arising from cross-cultural communication are not inventions of 20th- or 21st-century scholarship but are also perceivable in the OT, as has been pointed out by Elmer Smick in his presidential address at the 40th annual meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society on November 18, 1988 (cf. Elmer B. Smick, "Old Testament Cross-Culturalism: Paradigmatic or Enigmatic?" *JETS* 32 [1989]: 3-16). Smick's observations have important repercussions upon our understanding of the mission of Israel in the OT, a topic that has recently been tackled by Walter C. Kaiser Jr., *Mission in the Old Testament: Israel as a Light to the Nations* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000). As has been argued elsewhere, the conscious inclusion and use of mythological language in OT texts should be interpreted in the light of this cross-cultural reaching toward the surrounding nations. Compare here, as an example, the discussion on Ps 121:6 as found in my "Sun and Moon in Psalm 121:6: Some Notes on their Context and Meaning," in *To Understand Scriptures: Essays in Honor of William H. Shea* (ed. David Merling; Berrien Springs, MI: Institute of Archaeology, Siegfried H. Horn Archaeological Museum, Andrews University, 1997), 33-43.

45. Klingbeil ("Pragmática lingüística," 131-33) has argued for paying sufficient attention to semantics, co-text (= text in the larger context), and context (involving entire books, cultural, religious, and historical context).

46. Concerning the importance of orality in the transmission and communication process in ancient Israel, see Alan R. Millard, "Oral Proclamation and Written Record: Spreading and

The culture of the ancient Mediterranean was a traditionally oral culture into which literacy had made a strong advance, and although literacy was mostly concentrated in the social and political elite, society at large was characterized by a lively synergism of the oral and the written. Modern theoretical models of a fundamental disjunction or opposition between the oral and the literate modes (whether social, linguistic, cognitive or hermeneutical) fail to illuminate either their manifest coexistence or their fluid interaction in the Greco-Roman period and offer no adequate account of the ways in which the literate participated in oral culture or the illiterate participated in literate culture.<sup>47</sup>

#### TOWARD A METAPHOR MAP OF EPHESIANS

In the following section I will try to describe the “metaphor map” of the Epistle to the Ephesians. This has two important motives: First, it will provide future research focusing on metaphors and on the Epistle to the Ephesians a convenient point of departure. Second, looking at the larger picture will permit us to evaluate the effectiveness of Paul’s communication strategy, since it will not only challenge us to look at particular (and perhaps even dominating) metaphors in the text but also enable us to evaluate and perceive the larger metaphor landscape and the possible division into main metaphors and submetaphors.<sup>48</sup> Clearly, metaphor research in the Epistle to the Ephesians has been done before, and this study does not represent an entirely new approach to the issue.<sup>49</sup> However, by looking

---

Preserving Information in Ancient Israel,” in *Michael: Historical, Epigraphical and Biblical Studies in Honor of Prof. Michael Heltzer* (ed. Y. Avishur and Robert Deutsch; Tel Aviv: Archaeological Center Publications, 1999), 237–41. The emphasis on public oratory in the known 1st-century A.D. world required a proper preparation in this regard. Concerning this, see Bruce W. Winter, “Rhetoric,” in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* (ed. Gerald F. Hawthorne and Ralph P. Martin; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993), 820–22. Millard has also provided a very helpful discussion of orality and writing/reading in the time of Jesus (Alan R. Millard, *Reading and Writing in the Time of Jesus* [The Biblical Seminar 69; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000], 154–209). He argues for an important interaction between oral testimony (especially relevant for the genesis of the Gospels) and written witnesses. One should also not ignore the fact that texts were expensive. Paul’s letters were written and sent to one particular church and then most probably exchanged among the churches. Individual members most likely heard the read version.

47. Henry Y. Gamble, “Literacy and Book Culture,” in *Dictionary of New Testament Background* (ed. Craig A. Evans and Stanley E. Porter; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000), 646.

48. The division between metaphor and submetaphor can be found in Klingbeil, *Yahweh Fighting from Heaven*, 28–29. To illustrate this point, a look at Klingbeil’s analysis of the metaphors of God in the Psalms can be helpful. In the case of the Psalms the metaphor of God’s body has different submetaphors, including face, ear, eye, eyelids, mouth, lips, arm, palm, finger, feet, wings, and hand, which need to be understood in relation to the main metaphor, “body.”

49. See here, for example, Wayne E. Ward, “One Body: One Church,” *RevExp* 60 (1963): 399–413; George E. Howard, “Head/Body Metaphors of Ephesians,” *NTS* 20 (1974): 350–56; Josef Ernst, “From the Local Community to the Great Church, Illustrated from the Church

beyond the individual metaphor (or submetaphor) to the whole of the metaphor map and viewing the resulting data in the framework of pragmatic research, focusing upon the way it communicates, I hope to gain a clearer understanding of Pauline communication strategies in general. Future studies will be able to evaluate the particular metaphors and submetaphors in more detail.<sup>50</sup> Another interesting area of research that will not be pursued in this study involves the discussion concerning the disputed authorship of the epistle. Will it be possible to perceive in the biblical NT writings similar “metaphorical fingerprints” in writings that have been clearly identified as being Pauline and those that are heatedly debated (such as Ephesians)? While the consideration of pragmatics will prohibit categorical answers to this question (after all: distinct churches living in distinct religious and cultural contexts may have required distinct metaphors that would speak to their needs and challenges), it may provide a new and creative angle to the discussion.

Just a quick glance at table 1 (p. 286) indicates the high density of metaphors employed by the author of the Epistle to the Ephesians. I could distinguish 10 main metaphors that each had a significant number of submetaphors that were somehow connected to the main metaphor. This density of metaphors can be quantified as fig. 1 shows (p. 288). In fig. 1, “relative occurrences” refers to the number of different submetaphors existing in a particular main metaphor category. For example, in the status metaphor, 3 different submetaphors could be identified: τὸν ἄρχοντα τῆς ἐξουσίας τοῦ ἀέρος ‘the prince of the power of the air’ (Eph 2:2), ἀπηλωτριωμένοι τῆς πολιτείας τοῦ Ἰσραὴλ ‘being alienated from the citizenship of Israel’ (Eph 2:12), and πρεσβεύω ‘acting as an ambassador’ (Eph 6:20). The category of “absolute occurrences” refers to the total of the relative occurrences. For

---

Patterns of Philippians and Ephesians,” *BTB* 6 (1976): 237–57; Paul L. Hammer, “Canon and Theological Variety: A Study in the Pauline Tradition,” *ZNW* 67 (1976): 83–89; Peter Richardson, “Weak and Strong: The Changing of a Metaphor,” *Crux* 13/2 (1976): 3–9; Brian Daines, “Paul’s Use of the Analogy of the Body of Christ,” *EvQ* 50 (1978): 71–78; Andrew Perriman, “‘His Body, Which Is the Church . . .’: Coming to Terms with Metaphor,” *EvQ* 62 (1990): 123–42; Gregory W. Dawes, “Analogies, Metaphors and Women as Priests,” *Pacifica* 7 (1994): 47–58; John K. McVay, *Ecclesial Metaphor in the Epistle to the Ephesians from the Perspective of a Modern Theory of Metaphor* (Ph.D. diss., University of Sheffield, 1995); Mouton, “The Communicative Power of the Epistle to the Ephesians,” 280–307; idem, “The Transformation Potential of Ephesians in a Situation of Transition,” *Semeia* 78 (1997): 121–43; Richard Lemmer, “ἡ οἰκονομία τοῦ μυστηρίου τοῦ ἀποκεκρυμμένου ἐν τῷ θεῷ: Understanding Body of Christ in the Letter to the Ephesians,” *Neot* 32 (1998): 459–95; Michael E. Gudorf, “The Use of πάλιν in Ephesians 6:12,” *JBL* 117 (1998): 331–35; Dawes, *The Body in Question*, passim; Annette Merz, “Why Did the Pure Bride of Christ (2 Cor. 11:2) Become a Wedded Wife (Eph. 5:22–33)? Theses about the Intertextual Transformation of an Ecclesiological Metaphor,” *JSNT* 79 (2000): 131–47; and Carolyn Osiek, “The Bride of Christ (Ephesians 5:22–33): A Problematic Wedding,” *BTB* 32 (2002): 29–39.

50. It should be kept in mind that this study is part and parcel of a larger research project entitled *La iglesia, cuerpo de Cristo y plenitud de Dios*, undertaken by different research groups involving professors and postgraduate students of the Theology Faculty at River Plate Adventist University, which focuses upon the Epistle to the Ephesians and more particularly upon its ecclesiology.

TABLE 1. *Metaphor Map of Ephesians*

<i>Metaphor</i>	<i>Submetaphor</i>	<i>Reference</i>
Family	Adoption	1:5
	We have received an <i>inheritance</i> from God (verbal form: κληρόω)	1:11, 18b
	God, the glorious <i>father</i>	1:17; 2:18; 3:14; 4:6
	Members of God's <i>family</i>	2:19
	Like <i>children</i>	4:14; 5:1
	<i>Husband</i>	5:23, 24, 25
	<i>Slaves of Christ</i>	6:6
	<i>Master in heaven</i> (= Christ)	6:9
<i>Metaphor</i>	<i>Submetaphor</i>	<i>Reference</i>
Buildings	We are <i>God's house</i> , dwelling	2:20, 22
	<i>Foundation</i> of apostles and prophets	2:20
	<i>Cornerstone</i> = Jesus Christ	2:20
	<i>God's holy temple</i>	2:21
	Christ more and more <i>at home</i> in your heart	3:17
	Leaders equip God's people to <i>build up</i> the church	4:12
<i>Metaphor</i>	<i>Submetaphor</i>	<i>Reference</i>
Fluid manipulation	<i>Pour out/bestowed</i> (grace)	1:6
	<i>Purchased us through blood</i>	1:7
	<i>Showered us</i> (with grace/kindness)	1:8
	Hearts <i>flooded</i> with light	1:18
	<i>Filled with</i> the fullness of life and power	3:19
	<i>Given over</i> to all kinds of impurity and greed	4:19
	All Holy Spirit to <i>fill</i> and <i>control</i> you	5:18
	Church is <i>washed</i> by baptism and God's word	5:26
<i>Metaphor</i>	<i>Submetaphor</i>	<i>Reference</i>
Legal terminology	<i>Inheritance</i>	1:11, 14, 18b; 5:5
	<i>Guarantee</i>	1:14
	Place of honor / <i>right side</i> of God	1:20
	Salvation = <i>gift</i>	2:8
	<i>Stranger and foreigner</i>	2:19
	<i>Citizens</i>	2:19
<i>Metaphor</i>	<i>Submetaphor</i>	<i>Reference</i>
Sacrifice	<i>Christ gave himself as sacrifice</i>	5:2
	Sacrifice was <i>like sweet perfume</i> to God	5:2
<i>Metaphor</i>	<i>Submetaphor</i>	<i>Reference</i>
Status	<i>Prince</i> of the power of the air	2:2
	<i>Outsiders</i> , alienated from the <i>citizenship</i> of Israel	2:12
	<i>Ambassador</i>	6:20
<i>Metaphor</i>	<i>Submetaphor</i>	<i>Reference</i>
Agriculture	<i>Rooted</i> in love	3:17
	<i>Grounded</i> in love	3:17
<i>Metaphor</i>	<i>Submetaphor</i>	<i>Reference</i>
Light manifestation	Darkness	4:18; 5:8, 11
	Light	5:8, 9, 13, 14

TABLE 1. *Metaphor Map of Ephesians (cont.)*

<i>Metaphor</i>	<i>Submetaphor</i>	<i>Reference</i>
Position	<i>Above</i> anything	1:21
	Everything <i>under authority</i> of Christ	1:22
	<i>Under</i> God's anger	2:3
	God <i>raised us</i> from the dead along <i>with Christ</i>	2:6a
	We are <i>seated with him</i> in the heavenly realms	2:6b
	We are God's <i>incredible wealth</i>	2:7
	<i>Apart from</i> Christ and excluded	2:12
	<i>In the world</i> = without God = without hope	2:12
	<i>Belonging to</i> Christ	2:13
	<i>In</i> Christ	2:13, 17
	<i>Far away</i> (from Christ)	2:13, 17
	Broken down <i>the barrier</i>	2:14
	God <i>is over us</i>	4:6
	God <i>is in us</i> all	4:6
	God <i>is living through us</i> all	4:6
	Christ <i>came down</i> to the lowly world	4:9
Christ <i>ascended</i> higher than all the heavens	4:10	
Those in darkness <i>are far away</i> from the life of God	4:18	
<i>Metaphor</i>	<i>Submetaphor</i>	<i>Reference</i>
Body	Church = <i>Christ's body</i>	1:23a; 4:12; 5:29
	Body = <i>filled by Christ</i>	1:23b
	<i>Dead</i>	2:1, 5
	<i>Alive</i> in Christ	2:5
	We are <i>one</i> with Christ	2:6b; 5:32
	We are God's <i>masterpiece</i>	2:10
	<i>Re-created</i> in Christ	2:10
	Circumcision of <i>heart</i>	2:11
	<i>In</i> Christ = <i>creation of a new person</i> from both groups	2:15, 16
	<i>Two groups</i> = part of <i>same body</i>	3:6, 10
	United as <i>one body</i> , bound together	4:3, 4
	We will be <i>mature</i> and <i>full grown</i> in the Lord	4:13
	Measuring up to the <i>full stature</i> of Christ	4:13
	Christ = <i>Head of the body</i> , bring together as head	1:10; 4:15; 5:23
	<i>Whole body</i> is fitted, perfected under Christ's direction	4:16
	<i>Body parts</i> grow <i>individually</i>	4:16
	Healthy and <i>growing body</i>	4:16
	Shut their <i>minds</i> (those in darkness)	4:18
	Harden their <i>hearts</i> (those in darkness)	4:18
	Throw off your <i>old evil nature</i> /former way of life	4:22
	<i>New nature</i> —new person—new creation	4:24
	<i>Hearts</i> once full of darkness	5:8
	<i>Hearts</i> now full of light from the Lord	5:8
	<i>Spotless</i> and <i>without wrinkle</i>	5:27
	God's <i>armor</i> to resist enemy	6:13
	<i>Belt</i> of truth	6:14
	<i>Body armor</i> of God's righteousness	6:14
	<i>Shoes</i> of peace	6:15
	<i>Shield</i> of faith	6:16
	<i>Helmet</i> of salvation	6:17
<i>Sword</i> of the Spirit (= word of God)	6:17	

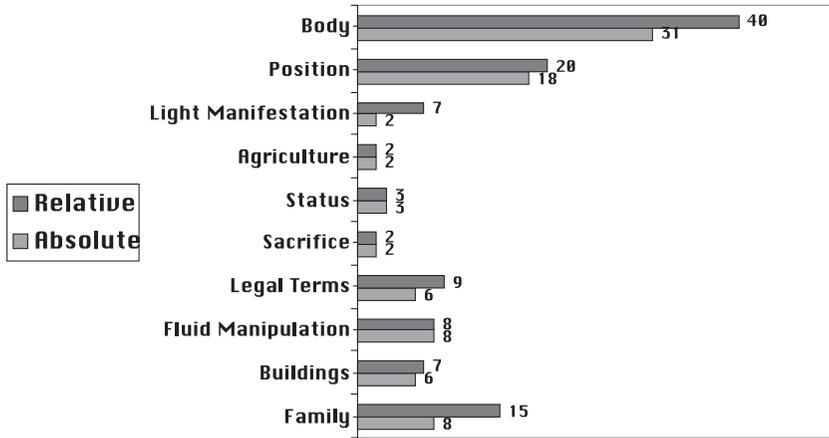


FIGURE 1. Relative and Absolute Occurrences of Metaphors in Ephesians.

example, in the family metaphor category, 8 different categories could be described. However, several of them appear not only once but twice or more, yielding a total of 15 for the absolute occurrences category.

Three metaphor categories exhibit unusual discrepancies between relative and absolute occurrences, the body metaphor (31/40), the light manifestation metaphor (2/7), and the family metaphor (8/15), while the remaining categories have more-balanced ratios. This imbalance suggests familiarity with a particular metaphor, both on the side of the author as well on the side of the readers, with whom the author wants to communicate effectively. The “light” and “darkness” metaphors would surely fall into this category, also in view of the fact that the pair is well known in the OT and is often used in a metaphorical sense.<sup>51</sup> The same thing can also be said for the family metaphor, which includes some of the best-known sub-metaphors, such as “father,” “children,” “husband,” “family members.”<sup>52</sup>

The metaphor map of Ephesians also shows another interesting fact: while the body metaphor (with 31 sub-metaphors) is by far the most used,

51. The combination occurs 30x in 25 verses in the OT, including Gen 1:4, 5, 18; Job 12:22, 25; 17:12; 18:18; 24:16; 26:10; 29:3; 38:19; Ps 112:4; 139:11; Eccl 2:13; Isa 5:20, 30; 9:1; 45:7; 58:10; 59:9; Lam 3:2; Ezek 32:8; Amos 5:18, 20; and Mic 7:8. Metaphorical usage of the two terms involves conscious confusion of ethical distinctions (Job 17:12, Isa 5:20) or as a metaphor for sin or unethical practice (Job 24:16). When darkness turns to light it means salvation for the righteous (Ps 112:4; Isa 9:1, 58:10). See, for more references the discussion found in Helmer Ringgren, “חֹשֶׁךְ, *hāšak*,” *TDOT* 5:252–58.

52. Ephesians 2:19 reads here, literally, καὶ οἰκεῖται τοῦ θεοῦ ‘and [you are] of the household of God’. As will be shown below, the household in NT texts (similar to OT references, such as בֵּית־אָב ‘house of the father’) is much more inclusive and comprehensive than our 21st-century concept of the term. For a very detailed description of NT household realities, see Craig S. Keener, “Family and Household,” in *Dictionary of New Testament Background* (ed. Craig A. Evans and Stanley E. Porter; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000), 353–68.

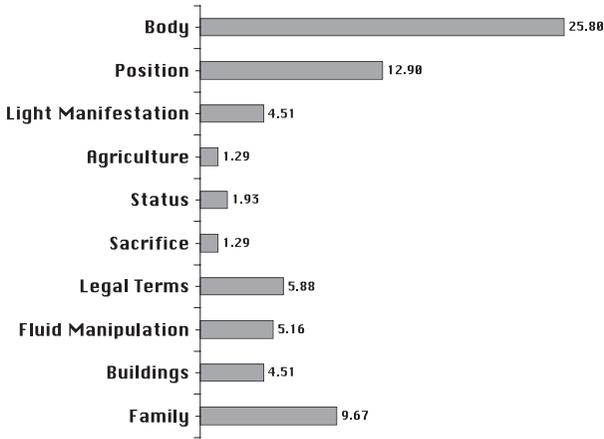


FIGURE 2. Percentage of Relative Occurrences of Metaphors to Overall Verses in Ephesians.

there are other significant metaphors that need to be taken into consideration when one seeks to understand the meaning of the letter and also the communication strategy that its author employed. In terms of percentages, of the 155 total verses that compose the Epistle to the Ephesians, in 86, distinct metaphors (= relative occurrences) are employed, which amounts to 55.48%. If one looks at the total-verse to absolute-occurrence ratio, the percentage rises to 72.90%.<sup>53</sup> Figure 2 will illustrate the respective ratios of the main metaphors to the overall number of verses in Ephesians. It should be noted that the absolute occurrences are used in the calculations.

#### PRELIMINARY EVALUATION OF THE METAPHOR MAP

In the following I will briefly review some of the main metaphor categories with their included submetaphors, beginning with the family metaphor. This metaphor contains 8 distinct submetaphors that connect to the family metaphor, including adoption, obtaining an inheritance (which is actually a verb, κληρώω, in Eph 1:11 in a passive aorist form, to be translated 'have obtained an inheritance'),<sup>54</sup> father, family, children, husband, slave, and master. Both the reference to δούλος 'slave' (Eph 6:6) and the reference to κύριος 'master' (Eph 6:9) need some further explanations. Their connection

53. The total for absolute occurrences is 113.

54. The verb appears only once in the NT but in two distinct contexts in the LXX indicating the casting of lots (1 Sam 14:41 and Isa 17:11). The Greek translation of Isa 17:11 is wrought with difficulties and does not seem to reflect the MT. The second reference to inheritance in Eph 1:18 involves the noun κληρονομία, coming from the same root as the earlier verbal form in 1:11.

to Christ (“slave of Christ”) indicates their metaphorical significance. When Paul addresses both slaves and household masters in his Ephesian audience, he connects important characteristics of each group (for example, humility, service in the case of slaves, or responsibility and authority in the case of masters) to the heavenly realities of things to come. In other words, “live, treat, lead, care for and make yourself responsible for others” as Christ’s slaves who are under their heavenly master. The 1st-century audience would easily connect with this, since ancient households were much bigger than modern ones and the idea of patronage and domestic relationships (including slaves) was always present.<sup>55</sup>

The second main metaphor is connected with buildings. The Ephesian believers are God’s house (= temple), built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ being the cornerstone (Eph 2:20–22). Ephesians 2:21 makes it very clear that “God’s house” mentioned earlier in Eph 2:20 is not any house but should be understood as God’s temple. Clearly, the author of Ephesians is well versed in the OT usage of the phrase, where it is a clear indication of the tabernacle or the temple of YHWH.<sup>56</sup> However, the metaphorical usage of the believers—who were once strangers and separated from God’s people—to grow into a holy temple in the Lord<sup>57</sup> goes beyond the OT usage. As a matter of fact one can observe here the combination of three main metaphors, that is, the legal terminology metaphors (“stranger”), wedded to a building metaphor (“building, temple”) by means of a metaphor borrowed from the realms of agriculture (“cause to grow”). The mixing of metaphors seems to be an important strategy of the Epistle to the Ephesians. The same strategy is also employed in Eph 4:16, where the body metaphor is used in connection with the noun οἰκοδομή, literally, ‘building, construction’, which belongs to the building metaphor. From a pragmatic perspective, the mixing of metaphors keeps the reader with the text—s/he surely has to pay careful attention. Furthermore, such distinct metaphors as “agriculture,” “buildings,” and “legal status” are able to speak to distinct audiences and different social strata. To put it more plainly: while metaphor A may not speak to me, since I am not involved in agricultural activities or cannot connect to monumental buildings, metaphor C is able to connect with me. Thus, it appears as if metaphor combinations and mixing should be interpreted first in terms of pragmatics or important communication strategies.

In this context another important observation can be made. While most metaphors are generally represented by nouns (for example, “temple,”

55. See for more information Keener, “Family and Household,” 353–68; Bruce J. Malina, “Patronage,” in *Biblical Social Values and Their Meaning* (ed. John J. Pilch and Bruce J. Malina; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1993), 133–37; and Mark McVann, “Family-Centeredness,” in *Biblical Social Values and Their Meaning* (ed. John J. Pilch and Bruce J. Malina; Peabody: Hendrickson, 1993), 70–73.

56. The Hebrew בית יְהוָה ‘house of YHWH’ appears 189× in 174 verses.

57. The Greek reads here, literally, αὐξῆται εἰς ναὸν ἁγίον ἐν κυρίῳ ‘grows into a holy temple in the Lord’. Note, that it is not *the* temple, but the indefinite, *a* temple.

"husband," "cornerstone," "inheritance," "head," and so on), some categories of the metaphor map of Ephesians presented in this study primarily comprise verbal forms. The metaphor "fluid manipulation" falls into this category. In real life, kindness or grace is not "showered" upon another human being (Eph 1:8). Similarly, how can one be "filled up" with kindness (Eph 3:19) or be "given over" to impurity (Eph 4:19)? Grace, kindness, and the Holy Spirit (Eph 5:18) are all elements that cannot be tabulated, counted, or seen easily and could be classified as "abstract categories." In this sense, a known physical process of fluid manipulation (for example, "fill," "pour," "wash," and so on) is employed to describe something invisible/abstract.

The second largest metaphor category, involving "position," also merits some comments. It is interesting that most submetaphors are basically expressed by means of prepositions ("under," "above," "with," "far away") and often in relationship with the risen Christ. Was it possible for the Ephesian audience to be "in Christ" (Eph 2:13, 17) or "far away from Christ" (Eph 2:13, 17; 4:18)? How can they be seated in/with Christ in the heavenly places, while being addressed physically by the author of the epistle?<sup>58</sup> Clearly, this requires a metaphorical interpretation of these important phrases.<sup>59</sup> Since most of these positional indications are connected to the central figure of Christ or God there exists a possible relation with the most important metaphor category—the body—which is also intimately connected to Christ, who is the head of the body (Eph 1:10, 4:15, 5:23) and who fills the body (Eph 1:23), and so on. The body metaphor contains many important submetaphors that are somehow related to the main metaphor. Among them are the basic characteristic of the body, being alive (Eph 2:5) or dead (Eph 2:1, 5), the heart of the body (Eph 2:11), the head (Eph 1:10, 4:15, 5:23), distinct (and unnamed) body parts (Eph 4:16), and so on. The body metaphor also contains important characteristics of the body: growth (Eph 4:16), being *one* (Eph 4:3, 4), and maturity (Eph 4:13) are among the most important. Another important submetaphor is the recreation metaphor that appears in Eph 2:10. "We"—going beyond the Ephesian audience and including the author himself—"are God's ποίημα 'workmanship' or 'masterpiece,'" a term that is only used for divinely created things/beings in the NT.<sup>60</sup> This body is the re-creation of God's first creation (Rom 1:20), connecting to another important metaphor employed

58. The Greek reads here συνεκάθισεν ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ 'seated in the heavenly [places] in/with Christ Jesus'. For a more detailed discussion of the difficult term ἐπουράνιος in the Epistle to the Ephesians, see recently Carmelo Martines, "Una reevaluación de la frase 'en los lugares celestiales' de la carta a los Efesios," *DavarLogos* 2 (2003): 29–45.

59. An interesting study focusing upon geographical markers in a NT text, mostly expressed by means of prepositions, can be found in my "'Up, down, in, out, through and back': Space and Movement in Old Testament Narrative, Ritual and Legal Texts and Their Application for the Study of Mark 1:1–3:12," *EstBib* 60 (2002): 283–309.

60. The Greek term appears only twice in the NT: in Rom 1:20 and Eph 2:10. Both contexts clearly mark God as the author of the creation. Compare also Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 346–47.

by Paul in Romans (see Rom 5:21–21, 1 Cor 15:21–22), namely the first/second Adam.<sup>61</sup> Inasmuch as Adam was the symbol of the first creation (as well as the fall!), Jesus is the representative of the new creation and thus, those that are “in Christ” are already part of this new creation and represent God’s “masterpiece,” the renewed body who has a collective quality.

Other important submetaphors of the body involve the spiritual armor. While not directly part of the body, the belt, body armor, shoes, shield, helmet, and sword are directly connected to the body and cover or protect it. In this sense, they should be understood in the larger context of the main category of “body.”<sup>62</sup>

Finally, it is significant to see the body metaphor (including its submetaphors) appearing in all six chapters of the Epistle to the Ephesians. The only other metaphor that shares this characteristic is the important family metaphor, although the later one appears less frequently.

#### CONCLUSIONS

In this study several important elements have been discussed in the larger context of the Epistle to the Ephesians. First, a brief review of recent contributions to metaphor theory in general has emphasized the complex nature of this literary device. Metaphor interpretation also requires a thorough familiarity with the culture of the author of any given text, a fact that could be demonstrated in the context of the family metaphor as used by the Ephesians and involving elements that the modern reader would not necessarily include in the metaphor category. Second, the importance of pragmatics for biblical interpretation has been stressed, since—without discarding traditional text-based biblical interpretation—it challenges us to look beyond mere morphology, semantics, syntax, or even historical context toward the more complex, but often ignored, communication strategy of a particular author. In the case of Ephesians, after a careful reading of the epistle and the subsequent formation of a metaphor map of the letter, we noted the mixing of metaphors involving two or three different main metaphor categories. This has been interpreted as a conscious strategy to force the audience to stay close to the author as well as provide a means of connecting to more readers, who may have been excluded if one would have focused exclusively upon a single main metaphor. Finally, the metaphor map has also shown the overall importance of metaphors in

61. See Gerald Bray, “Adam and Christ (Romans 5:12–21),” *Evangel* 18 (2000): 4–8; and also Larry J. Kreitzer, “Adam and Christ,” in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* (ed. Gerald F. Hawthorne and Ralph P. Martin; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993), 9–15.

62. Most discussions of Eph 6:10–20 focus solely upon the military connection of the employed metaphors and seem to overlook its relation to the important body metaphor. See, for example, Kraig L. Keck, “The Relevance of Ephesians 6:10–20 to the Ephesian Letter,” *Calvary Baptist Theological Journal* 10/2 (1994): 32–42; and Gudorf, “The Use of *πάλη* in Ephesians 6:12,” 331–35.

the communication strategy of the author of the Epistle to the Ephesians. While the body metaphor is statistically the most frequent metaphor (both in relative and absolute terms), the other metaphors should not be ignored or overlooked. Rather, future studies focusing upon the metaphors of the Epistle to the Ephesians should try to understand and explain the existing connections and interaction between the main metaphor categories.