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METAPHORICAL IMAGERY IN COLOSSIANS:  
THE NARRATIVE OF CHRISTIAN LIVING

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A Thesis  
Presented to the Faculty of  
Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,  
Department of Exegetical Theology  
in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Sacred Theology

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By  
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January 2019

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Reader

Dr. David Maxwell

Reader

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Each word, each metaphor, has a world inside of it.

J.A.O. Preus, *Just Words*

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## ABSTRACT

Muther, Paul D. “Metaphorical Imagery in Colossians: The Narratives of Christian Living.” STM thesis, Concordia Seminary, 2019. 114 pp.

Although many recent theologians employ conceptual metaphor theory to the Bible’s imagery surrounding the Gospel, few apply the same theory to the metaphors of Christian living. Although many theologians develop models to demonstrate the overall picture of Christian living, few tease out the implications of individual metaphors throughout a given work.

By applying conceptual metaphor theory and Justin Rossow’s narrative analysis tool of the actantial model to the text of Paul’s letter to the Colossians, this STM thesis examines three metaphors that Paul uses as he describes Christian living: CHRISTIAN LIFE IS ἈΓΩΝ, CHRISTIAN CHURCH IS ΣΩΜΑ, CHRISTIAN LIFE IS ΠΕΡΙΠΛΑΤΕΩ.

After an examination, this thesis develops each metaphor’s narrative insights for the tasks of preaching and teaching. This will provide a fresh avenue to see the logic behind the biblical text and help readers not only to hear Paul’s descriptions of the Christian life but also to think the way Paul thinks of the Christian life.

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

Scholarly work on biblical metaphor primarily focuses on metaphors for salvation. Resources like Jacob A. O. Preus' *Just Words*,<sup>1</sup> Jan Van der Watt's *Salvation in the New Testament*,<sup>2</sup> and Brenda Colijn's *Images of Salvation in the New Testament*<sup>3</sup> act as robust examples of the enthusiasm that theologians have for the metaphorical pictures of the Gospel, that is, the saving act in Christ.<sup>4</sup> But these tools have not been brought to bear with such richness to the biblical descriptions of the Christian life. My thesis will examine the interplay between the metaphorical worlds of the saving act in Christ and the Christian life within the Apostle Paul's letter to the Colossians.

#### The Thesis Statement

Paul uses rich, evocative imagery to describe both the saving act in Christ and the Christian life. In my thesis, I use a specific set of analytic tools, that of Justin Rossow's narrative model for conceptual metaphor, to bring a greater level of precision and clarity to the analysis of three of Paul's metaphors. I will demonstrate the limits of those metaphors within their historical context, the use of those metaphors within the letter to the Colossians, and the logical narratives

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<sup>1</sup> Jacob A. O. Preus, *Just Words: Understanding the Fullness of the Gospel*, (St. Louis: Concordia, 2000).

<sup>2</sup> Jan Van der Watt, ed., *Salvation in the New Testament: Perspectives on Soteriology* NovTSup 121 (Boston: Brill Academic, 2005).

<sup>3</sup> Brenda Colijn, *Images of Salvation in the New Testament* (Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2010).

<sup>4</sup> Unless otherwise noted, the references to "the Gospel" in this thesis refer to the specific saving act of God in Christ.

from them that guide his overall exhortation. I will then develop those insights for the teaching and preaching tasks.

### **The Current Status of the Question**

At its most basic, conceptual metaphor theory posits that concrete, physical experiences form the basis for the deep-seated concepts that order all thinking. If thinking has a fundamental physicality to it, then picture-language that evokes the senses, i.e. metaphor, becomes an integral part of any discussion of ideas and logical propositions.

The study of conceptual metaphor has become increasingly popular in biblical scholarship. Using the cognitive linguistic work of George Lakoff and his colleagues,<sup>5</sup> Bonnie Howe has applied conceptual metaphor theory to understand the moral arguments of 1 Peter within image schema.<sup>6</sup> Justin Rossow has written concerning image schema of conceptual metaphor.<sup>7</sup> In his dissertation, Rossow applies the tools of narrative criticism developed by Algirdas Julien (A. J.) Greimas<sup>8</sup> to metaphoric language so that he can order the metaphor's world in a specific set of relationships: narrative relationships.<sup>9</sup> In doing his work, Rossow provides an avenue of greater precision in analysis of metaphor and in discourse driven by that metaphor.<sup>10</sup>

Although there are works that demonstrate metaphorical pictures of the saving act in

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<sup>5</sup> George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980). For a brief listing of the range of their colleagues and contributors in the field of cognitive linguistics and conceptual metaphor theory, see Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, xi–xiii.

<sup>6</sup> Bonnie Howe, *Because You Bear This Name: Conceptual Metaphor and the Meaning of 1 Peter*, BibInt 81 (Boston: Brill, 2006), 5–7.

<sup>7</sup> Justin Rossow, “Preaching the Story Behind the Image: The Homiletical Fruit of a Narrative Approach to Metaphor,” *ConJ* 34 (2008): 9–21, <https://issuu.com/concordiasem/docs/cjwinter-spring08>.

<sup>8</sup> A. J. Greimas, *Structural Semantics: An Attempt at a Method*, trans. Daniele McDowell, Ronald Schleifer, and Alan Velie (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983).

<sup>9</sup> Justin Rossow, “Preaching the Story Behind the Image: A Narrative Approach to Metaphor for Preaching,” (PhD diss., Concordia Seminary, 2009), 34–43.

<sup>10</sup> Rossow, “Preaching the Story: Metaphor for Preaching,” 24–31.

Christ, the tools of metaphor analysis have not been brought to bear with enthusiasm on the biblical descriptions of Christian living. There is a lack in the depth of literary analysis for the metaphors of Christian living. This thesis posits that the research and methodology that has been applied to the language of the saving act can also be applied to that of Christian living.

Therefore, we will consider how Paul conceptualizes Christian living. What underlying narratives provide the force to make his exhortation effective? What metaphorical language does he most often employ, and is his choice of language affected at all by the way he describes salvation in the passage? What narrative relationships are present beneath the text, and how do Paul's many metaphors interact in order to drive his logic and provide a full picture of his theology?

### **The Plan of the Thesis**

Recent works, such as Paul Deterding's Concordia Commentary<sup>11</sup> and Christopher Beetham's monograph,<sup>12</sup> have begun to apply the tools of conceptual metaphor theory to exegetical analysis. N.T. Wright's short commentary on Colossians and Philemon<sup>13</sup> also gives a brief overview of the richness of Paul's metaphorical language in Colossians. But where these commentaries call forward and analyze metaphors, this thesis uses Rossow's narrative model for conceptual metaphor<sup>14</sup> to bring a greater level of precision and clarity to the analysis of metaphor.

Ben Witherington's commentary on socio-rhetorical concerns in Colossians, Ephesians and

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<sup>11</sup> Paul Deterding, *Colossians*, ConC (St. Louis: Concordia, 2003), 23–25.

<sup>12</sup> Christopher A. Beetham, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letter of Paul to the Colossians*, BibInt 96 (Boston: Brill Academic, 2008).

<sup>13</sup> N. T. Wright, *The Epistles of Paul to the Colossians and to Philemon*, TNTC 12 (Grand Rapids: InterVarsity Press, 1986).

<sup>14</sup> Rossow, "Preaching the Story: Metaphor for Preaching," 45.

Philemon<sup>15</sup> also contains valuable insights for this thesis. His analysis of Paul's argument, spanning from salvation to exhortation, does well to place these letters within an appropriate socio-rhetorical framework, namely Asiatic rhetoric.<sup>16</sup> In Colossians Paul's use of deliberative paraenesis informs his choice of metaphor and the logic of his argument, to deliver his desired effect.<sup>17</sup> The tools of narrative metaphor analysis and conceptual metaphor provide the conceptual world that underpins the letter's rhetorical force.

Richard B. Hays' *Echoes of Scripture*<sup>18</sup> and Christopher Beetham's subsequent monograph will provide the biblical, intertextual framework necessary to develop Paul's conceptual world. Their work sets the stage for socio-historical analysis of the text, and my thesis will describe metaphor in the letters of Colossians within its historical and biblical contexts.

The thesis will be ordered as follows. In chapter one, I present my prospectus. In chapter two, I will review current and applicable literature. In chapter three, I will describe the current scholarship on conceptual metaphor, lay out my methodology for metaphorical analysis, and review the history of interpretation of Colossians in regards to Paul's metaphorical language. In chapter four, I will proceed with an exegetical study of Colossians, specifically on three metaphors: CHRISTIAN LIFE IS ἈΓΩΝ (Col 1:28–29, 2:1, 3:15, 4:12), CHRISTIAN CHURCH IS ΣΩΜΑ (Col 1:1–2, 18, 22, 24; 2:11, 17, 23; 2:9, 11, 17, 19; 3:15), and CHRISTIAN LIFE IS ΠΕΡΙΠΑΤΕΩ (Col 1:10; 2:6; 3:7; 4:5). I will position the metaphors of Christian life in Paul's greater argument, paying particular attention to the interaction between his metaphors for salvation and those of Christian living. In chapter five, I will discuss the use of these metaphors for the tasks of

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<sup>15</sup> Ben Witherington, *The Letters to Philemon, the Colossians, and the Ephesians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Captivity Epistles* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007).

<sup>16</sup> Witherington, *The Letters*, 2.

<sup>17</sup> Witherington, *The Letters*, 4–5.

<sup>18</sup> Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993).

preaching and teaching.

The proposed thesis will benefit the scholarly community in three ways. First, the proposed thesis is an outworking of recent scholarship on metaphor, which applies the tools of narrative criticism to biblical metaphor. Rossow has developed tools for exploring metaphor, and these tools are helpful for the preacher and for the exegete. I will provide a concrete example that works through his methodology.

Second, the proposed thesis will enrich and broaden Lutheran, exegetical teaching on Christian living by describing the conceptual worlds within which the apostle Paul sets his discussion of Christian living. Lutherans have a tradition of rich, deep Gospel language, but it has sadly left our expression of the language of sanctification shallow and poor. To this end, the thesis will map the inferences encouraged by the conceptual worlds that Paul describes, will identify a biblical vocabulary for sanctification, and will demonstrate an understanding of how such a vocabulary interacts with the vocabulary and concepts of salvation.

Third, the proposed thesis will move beyond the basic application of Rossow's theory by developing his methods exegetically to the concerns of a complete book of the Bible. Where Rossow's dissertation discusses hermeneutic concerns and addresses the development of his model, I intend to apply this model within the realm of exegesis. Where Rossow extracts and describes single metaphors, this thesis will work with the interaction of metaphoric narratives within Paul's lines of argumentation in Colossians.

### **The Methodological Procedure to Be Employed**

I am analyzing and doing careful exegesis on the text of Colossians with special attention paid to Paul's descriptions and exhortations of Christian living for the purpose of applying my findings to the preaching and teaching tasks. To this end, I employ a methodological procedure



that includes the following concerns.

First, I distinguish between metaphoric and non-metaphoric language in the text, using Rossow's definition of metaphor as duality: "thinking about, speaking of, or experiencing *one thing* in terms of *something else*."<sup>19</sup> Metaphoric aspects of Paul's vocabulary will be distinguished through synchronic analysis of meaning and usage. These aspects will be developed using secondary literature that reconstructs the world of Paul and of ancient Asia, such as David Williams's *Paul's Metaphors: Their Context and Character*.<sup>20</sup>

Second, I provide a detailed exegesis of the three metaphors. This is of paramount importance for the understanding of any passage in the Bible, and any further study of a text must be based upon solid exegetical work. Not only is a close study of each passage needed, it is also necessary to understand how the logical narratives of the metaphors allow Paul to move toward his exhortation. Especially for the study and analysis of Paul's conceptual metaphors, it will be essential to also understand his context and compositional style. Paul's understanding of metaphor will be culturally normed and socially guided only by those ideas and texts that have influenced him and his audience.

Third, I develop metaphoric imagery through the methodology of Rossow's *Preaching the Story Behind the Image*. Rossow identifies the structures evoked by a signifier as both concepts integral to the signifier and external entailments that lead to a complex of signifiers/conceptual signifieds. This complex forms an implicit narrative that drives the logic of the utterance. He applies A. J. Greimas' actantial model to demonstrate all the relationships possible within a narrative. Working within the text as a guide, he then maps the source material to the target

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<sup>19</sup> Rossow, "Preaching the Story: Metaphor for Preaching," 52. Emphasis original.

<sup>20</sup> David J. Williams, *Paul's Metaphors: Their Context and Character* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1999).

material.

Fourth, I will distinguish between metaphors of salvation and of Christian living. The place of the metaphors in Paul's argument, the grammar of his utterance, and the conceptual mapping of the metaphor's narrative will demonstrate in which ways Paul's utterance is focused on the saving act or on Christian living and how he understands them to be interacting.

To illustrate this methodology, I will furnish four examples. First, Paul will characterize his ministry as a struggle (Col 1:28–29, 2:1). He attributes the struggle of ministry not only to himself but also to his fellow-workers (Col 4:12). Is he only writing of prayer, or does his struggle include the entire Christian life? In his struggle, what role does the divine play? Is this struggle a suffering or a training?

Second, starting in Col 1:18 Paul calls Jesus the head of the body, a metaphor of ecclesiology which Paul uses to infer the cosmic Gospel (Col 1:18–20) and to infer a responsibility on the part of the Church, his body (Col 3:12). Does this ecclesiological metaphor remain implicit in the Colossian paraenesis (3:18–4:1)? Are there metaphorical narrative connections that drive Paul's logic for the Colossians to clothe themselves with virtues bound over with love?

Third, Paul Deterding briefly develops the conceptual narrative of Paul's phrase ἐν Χριστῷ his exegesis of Col 1:2.<sup>21</sup> While he notes that this use of the phrase is peculiar, the conceptual boundary language that it evokes is the basis of the body metaphor mentioned above. What other metaphors in Colossians incorporate the language of boundaries? In what ways does the category of boundary language serve metaphors of salvation, or of Christian living?

Fourth, Paul describes the Christian life in terms of a journey (Col 1:10; 2:6; 3:7; 4:5).

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<sup>21</sup> Deterding, *Colossians*, 23–25.

What aspects of the Christian life does the journey metaphor highlight? What does it hide? Many translations will gloss περιπατέω in a way that moves directly to its application: to conduct, behave or live. If translators and dictionaries identify the metaphor so closely with its metaphorical meaning, does the underlying narrative logic of a dead metaphor still have force?

Finally, I expound the metaphors of Christian living within their exegetical limits and force for the tasks of preaching and teaching. This move represents Rossow's final mapping; his model is not complete without application of narrative inference structures to a contemporary audience.

### **The Outcomes Anticipated**

First, I anticipate that I will find the apostle Paul to have a rich metaphorical lens by which he understands not only the theology of salvation but also of the Christian life. I will gain a picture of the conceptual world within which Paul can pursue the logic of his exhortation. By knowing and testing the limits of this world, the reader can gain a greater understanding of Paul's perspective on Christian living.

Second, I seek to demonstrate the complex interaction and extended dialogue in Paul's thought between the saving act and Christian living when he applies their related conceptual worlds to the Colossians. His theology is never in a vacuum, and his concerns are not purely systematic. When providing pastoral care and guidance, he will often alternate between the comfort of the Gospel and the exhortation of the Law. While in theory they may be separated, in Paul's practice they are in constant dialogue.

Third, I demonstrate that Paul's understanding of Christian living will stem from and have dependence on his metaphorical understanding of the Gospel. Not only do I expect to find that there is an interaction between identity and life, but I also anticipate that the ideas of Christian living are subordinate to ideas of Christian identity both conceptually and rhetorically. To

misapprehend this or leave either side of the conversation unarticulated is to distort Paul's image of Christ and the Christian.

Fourth, I anticipate that this approach will prove fruitful to the homiletic task. By drawing on the underlying narrative structures of the metaphors in the text, I anticipate that I will allow for the rich development of themes both faithful to the text and resonant with the contemporary audience. The task of this pastoral exercise is to reason as Paul does in order to proclaim and exhort as he does.

### **The Research Areas to Be Pursued**

I will work to understand the traditional positions and current trends in Colossian scholarship. It is imperative that I am conversant with the grammatical, historical, and theological discussions of the exegetical community concerning Colossians.

I will pursue synchronic and conceptual vocabulary studies like those of Johannes Louw and Eugene Nida.<sup>22</sup> Valid synchronic study is essential for the conceptual work that underlies my area of study. In addition, I plan to pursue the work of Jan Van der Watt and Petrus Grabe, who have published concerning the controlling metaphors of salvation and of ethics in the books of the New Testament.

I will pursue socio-rhetorical scholarship, like that of Ben Witherington and Walter T. Wilson. The thesis will require understanding of the scholarly trends regarding Asiatic rhetoric, and the product of this thesis will inform the interaction between rhetorical force and conceptual metaphor.

I will pursue research on metaphor theory. Linguists like George Lakoff and Mark

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<sup>22</sup> Johannes P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida, eds. *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains*, 2nd ed. (New York: United Bible Societies, 1989).

Johnson<sup>23</sup> provide connections between patterns of thinking and linguistic expression that resonate with the theory of hermeneutics set forward by Jim Voelz.<sup>24</sup> Rossow harmonizes these authors when developing his narrative model. But there are further strands of metaphor theory that should be developed. Bonnie Howe,<sup>25</sup> Zoltan Kövecses,<sup>26</sup> and Paul Deterding<sup>27</sup> begin to develop the deep structures of conceptual metaphor, the basic spatial reasoning tools that orient all language.

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<sup>23</sup> Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*.

<sup>24</sup> James Voelz, *What Does This Mean? Principles of Biblical Interpretation in the Post-Modern World*, 2nd ed. (Concordia: St. Louis, 1997).

<sup>25</sup> Bonnie Howe, *Because You Bear This Name: Conceptual Metaphor and the Meaning of 1 Peter*, (Boston: Brill, 2006), 237.

<sup>26</sup> Zoltan Kövecses, *Metaphor in Culture: Universality and Variation*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

<sup>27</sup> Deterding, *Colossians*, 23–25.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Scholarly work often analyzes metaphor. It often uses metaphoric language in describing the logic of a text, but rarely does a scholar acknowledge the power of the descriptive language of metaphor so ubiquitous to communication. C. S. Lewis well describes the basic metaphoric nature of communication.

We can, if you like, say “God entered history” instead of saying “God came down to earth.” But, of course, “entered” is just as metaphorical as “came down.” You have only substituted horizontal or undefined movement for vertical movement. We can make our language duller; we cannot make it less metaphorical. We can make the pictures more prosaic; we cannot be less pictorial.<sup>1</sup>

Metaphor is not merely ornamentation; it is communication. The flourish of metaphor is merely making explicit the image that drives the logic of the thought already. Major conversation partners for my thesis include F. F. Bruce, Paul Deterding, N. T. Wright, and Peter T. O’Brien.

#### **F. F. Bruce’s *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians***

Frederick Fyvie (F. F.) Bruce is a notable figure in New Testament scholarship. His commentary includes expositions of Colossians, Philemon, and Ephesians. Written six years before his death, the commentary on Colossians is a revision of an earlier work. He follows the format of the New International Commentary on the New Testament for his interaction with the text: text, exposition, and notes. As he notes, “I have offered a translation of my own.”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> C. S. Lewis, “Is Theology Poetry?” in *The Weight of Glory and Other Addresses* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 2001), 133.

<sup>2</sup> F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, 2nd ed. NICNT (Grand

His analysis of the text breaks down into an eight-part outline: Prescript (1:1–2), The Person and Work of Christ (1:3–23), Paul’s Ministry (1:24–2:7), False Teaching and its Antidote (2:8–3:4), The Christian Life (3:5–4:6), Personal Notes (4:7–17), and Final Greeting and Benediction (4:18),<sup>3</sup> conforming roughly to the traditional outline of Colossians.<sup>4</sup>

Bruce’s strength is his attention to the grammatical and syntactical features of the text; his weakness is his literary analysis of the letter as a whole. He keeps conversation with other scholars at a minimum in his work, so that the bulk of his writing is on the features and the meaning of the text, only hinting at the great scholarship and care that inform Bruce’s careful choice of verbiage. He speculates when applicable on the background that could provide “the germ of [his] conception”<sup>5</sup> but his thoughts turn quickly back to the meaning of the text.

Bruce regularly makes use of the three metaphors that my thesis examines. For example, his discussion of the Christ-hymn of Col 1:15–20 includes paragraphs on the implications for the Christian life<sup>6</sup> and the limits of this metaphor.<sup>7</sup> His use of the journey metaphor comes subtly and in passing rather than with robust intention.<sup>8</sup>

However, where Bruce falls short is his demonstration of the whole book’s form. His front matter discusses the elements surrounding the letter’s creation but does not provide the vital thread that allows the reader to see the letter come together as a whole. The unity of his commentary comes purely from the unity of the book, without explicit intention on his part to

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Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), xii.

<sup>3</sup> Bruce, *Colossians, Philemon, Ephesians*, 35–36.

<sup>4</sup> See Deterding below.

<sup>5</sup> Bruce, *Colossians, Philemon, Ephesians*, 69.

<sup>6</sup> Bruce, *Colossians, Philemon, Ephesians*, 64–70.

<sup>7</sup> Bruce, *Colossians, Philemon, Ephesians*, 70–71.

<sup>8</sup> Bruce, *Colossians, Philemon, Ephesians*, 105–6, 125, 131, 137, 144, 173.

pull together the longer threads of Paul's thought.

### **Paul Deterding's *Concordia Commentary on Colossians***

Paul Deterding's standalone *Concordia Commentary on Colossians* is a model of Lutheran exegesis. More scholarly than pastoral, Deterding follows the standard layout of the Concordia Commentary series, first interacting with the original language in textual notes and second with the greater theological perspective in the commentary. He is more apt to stay in the world of the first century than to dwell on the implications for the modern reader.

Paul Deterding's organizing principle uses the metaphor of orchestral movements in order to describe the letter's recurring and deepening themes and language. "As the overture of a symphony or opera introduces musical themes that will be taken up later in the work, so [Col 1:3–20] ... serves to introduce themes that will be developed further in the epistle."<sup>9</sup> Each subsequent section brings back the themes introduced in the introduction, helping Deterding to draw the entirety of the letter together. Following traditional approaches, he divides the epistle into two sections: Kerygma (Col 1:1–2:23) and Paraenesis (Col 3:1–4:18).

Paul Deterding's commentary is useful to my thesis for two reasons. First, his doctoral work on the concept of the corporate personality allows him to explore Paul's use of the metaphor of the Body of Christ throughout the letter, both in regards to corporate salvation and Christian life together.<sup>10</sup> He maps the metaphorical language to corresponding Lutheran insights on Baptism, the baptismal life, the tension of Already/Not Yet, and the parousia.<sup>11</sup> He detects the logic of being "in" Christ as a theme of the letter that drives the paraenetic section of Colossians.

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<sup>9</sup> Deterding, *Colossians*, 26.

<sup>10</sup> Deterding, *Colossians*, xii–xiii.

<sup>11</sup> Deterding, *Colossians*, 137–40.



In these cases, he rightly identifies corresponding signifiers in the underlying narrative that enable his reasoning.<sup>12</sup>

For example, Deterding's discussion of Col 2:16–23 demonstrates the synchronic basis for Paul's insights into the relationship of the Head to the Body. In this case, the interaction between the source and target domains allow the logic of the Body's growth to rest clearly on the target domain: Christology and soteriology. He demonstrates how the logic that Paul has developed around his metaphorical understanding of Head and Body in Colossians recurs in a deepening way throughout the letter, bearing the fruit of a coherent and persuasive argument.

Second, Deterding summarizes his commentary on the Christian life in his discussion of a Pauline Model of Growth in Sanctification.<sup>13</sup> His comments draw together the descriptions of the Christian life from throughout the letter and give the reader the overall impression of Paul's letter to the Colossians.

Paul Deterding moves quickly from the descriptions of Christian life to the overall summarization of those descriptions, under the metaphor, THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IS GROWTH. Although this is a useful tool for scholarly dialog, it moves too quickly past the most useful tool for the homiletician: a careful understanding of the narrative underpinnings presented by each of the separate and interrelated metaphors. Each metaphor highlights certain aspects of Christian life and hides others. Deterding highlights the major metaphor in Colossians, THE CHRISTIAN LIFE AS ΣΩΜΑ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΥ, but as Deterding draws the letter together his focus on one particular metaphor hides the insights of the other metaphors for Christian living. Would the lens of THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IS A ΠΕΡΙΠΑΤΕΩ, another metaphor that Paul uses within the letter, highlight

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<sup>12</sup> Deterding, *Colossians*, 57–59; 75–80; 101–2; 114; 120–21; 137–38.

<sup>13</sup> Deterding, *Colossians*, 153–57. Deterding contrasts a Pauline model (Figure 1, p. 155) with an Anthropocentric Model (Figure 2, p. 156).

other aspects of Paul's paraenesis? Would THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IS AN ΑΓΩΝ highlight even further aspects?

Although Deterding's models have their place in the dialog, the goal of this thesis is to apply the actantial model in the space between the text and the general models of Christian living in order to dwell on the metaphors and the narrative that lie beneath. Deterding's approach to the question of Paul's description of the Christian life allows the reader to take Paul's letter as a whole. The goal of this thesis is to understand the differences in perspective of the various narratives that underlie Deterding's overall model.

### **N. T. Wright's *Colossians and Philemon***

The Tyndale commentary series has as its goal to bring scholarly insights to the general readership in a helpful way. N. T. Wright participated in this commentary series as part of a comprehensive update. Wright describes Paul's structure by way of metaphor.

Colossians, like many books, and for that matter like most symphonies, plays or poems, is not the sort of work that can be simply split up into successive units... It is more like a flower, growing from a small bud to a large bud and then gradually opening up to reveal, layer upon layer, the petals that had all along been hidden inside.<sup>14</sup>

Wright divides his commentary differently from the traditional structure of Colossians (Col 1–2, theology; Col 3–4, ethics). His commentary is in four parts: Opening Greeting (Col 1:1–2), Introduction of Paul And His Theme (Col 1:3–2:5), The Appeal for Christian Maturity (Col 2:6–4:6), and Final Greetings (Col 4:7–18).

Wright orders his study by way of metaphor and then proceeds to demonstrate the purpose

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<sup>14</sup> Wright, *Colossians and Philemon*, 22.

of the book as encouraging the Colossians toward Christian maturity as they avoid immaturity.<sup>15</sup> Maturity is found “in their drawing out, and applying to personal and communal life, the meaning of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.”<sup>16</sup> Obedience to God’s plan grants maturity.<sup>17</sup>

Where N. T. Wright’s commentary works to understand Paul’s letter under the single theme of Christian maturity, my thesis detects and develops three separable metaphors and their individual development and purpose within the letter. As noted, every individual metaphor highlights and hides unique features of its target domain. When Wright defines the aim of the letter as Christian maturity, he then works to highlight the features of the letter that demonstrate maturity language and hide those portions of the letter that do not. Wright is describing the aim of the letter, I am describing the use of these metaphors within the letter.

N. T. Wright’s language and style all commend him to a general readership. He mentions all three of the metaphors treated in my thesis.<sup>18</sup> His treatment of Paul’s paraenetic section (Col 3:1–4:6) is especially well done as he examines the images behind Paul’s commands to “put to death”<sup>19</sup> and “take off” vices more suitable to an immature lifestyle and “put on” the new clothes that correspond to a life hidden in Christ.

The danger for the scholarly reader is to assume that the flowery, metaphorical imagery N. T. Wright mines is mere ornamentation, inserted into his commentary in order to keep the attention of the general readership. Behind arresting language, he demonstrates the power of

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<sup>15</sup> Wright, *Colossians and Philemon*, 22, 29, 45–46, 51.

<sup>16</sup> Wright, *Colossians and Philemon*, 29.

<sup>17</sup> Wright, *Colossians and Philemon*, 153.

<sup>18</sup> Wright, *Colossians and Philemon*, 50, 62, 96–97.

<sup>19</sup> Wright, *Colossians and Philemon*, 139.

metaphor in the logic of the underlying narratives.

In addition to the above example of the Colossian letter structure, N. T. Wright's treatment of Col 3:5–17 finds its rhetorical and logical force in the inferences of its guiding verbs: take off and put on. "Having taken off the shabby 'clothes' appropriate for the old age, the Colossians are to be fitted out with beautiful new robes, appropriate for their new position."<sup>20</sup> Colossians 3:17's bond of perfection "possibly carr[ies] the metaphorical meaning of an outer garment holding the others together."<sup>21</sup> Whether or not the images retain their live novelty in the text, the Colossians were to shed their old habits and put on new virtues that are fitting for the Body of Christ. "How many of these metaphors were still 'live' for Paul it is hard to say. Even he must have had difficulty imagining Christians 'walking' in Christ by being well rooted, solidly built like a house, confirmed and settled like a legal document, and overflowing like a jug full of wine."<sup>22</sup> The measure of a live versus dead metaphor resides less in its novelty to the imagination and more in author's use of its underlying logic.

As my thesis will demonstrate, the use of A. J. Griemas's actantial model and Justin Rossow's narrative model will provide a scholarly framework to order the metaphorical picture into its narrative underpinning. Wright and other commentaries do well to describe and illustrate Paul's line of thought, but the purpose of my thesis is to use Paul's images to think in the way that Paul thinks.

### **Peter O'Brien's *Colossians, Philemon***

Peter O'Brien writes his commentary on Colossians and Philemon under the Word Biblical

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<sup>20</sup> Wright, *Colossians and Philemon*, 146.

<sup>21</sup> Wright, *Colossians and Philemon*, 147.

<sup>22</sup> Wright, *Colossians and Philemon*, 104.

Commentary (WBC) Series. The aim of the series is to “make the technical and scholarly understanding of scripture understandable by—and useful to—the fledgling student, the working minister as well as to colleagues in the guild of professional scholars and teachers.”<sup>23</sup> His work follows the WBC format, which includes an original Translation and Notes, Form/Structure/Setting, Comment, and Explanation. O’Brien’s volume was published in 1982 and has been considered among the most complete commentaries on Colossians.<sup>24</sup> His volume on Colossians and Philemon is subject to a Zondervan recall for plagiarism.<sup>25</sup>

Peter O’Brien’s analysis of Colossians does not explicitly divide the epistle into the traditional categories of kerygma and paraenesis, but his divisions follow those categories closely.<sup>26</sup> O’Brien describes Paul’s letter as a pastoral letter centered on specific issues, as the universal Gospel comes into conflict with the local Colossian heresy.<sup>27</sup> He identifies the four major teachings of the book as Christology, Ecclesiology, Eschatology, and Tradition.<sup>28</sup>

Peter O’Brien’s style focuses on the text of the passages, enabling him to discuss the themes of the letter as a whole in the specific textual locations where they are found. He does not stray far from the grammar and vocabulary of Paul, even when summarizing each section.

O’Brien’s commentary lacks a persuasive high-level summary of the letter. He has a commendable grasp on the text, setting, and scholarship surrounding Colossians. He connects the text together by means of references. His summaries of the subsections do well to describe the

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<sup>23</sup> Peter T. O’Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, WBC 44 (Waco, TX: Word, 1982), x.

<sup>24</sup> “Colossians,” Best Commentaries, <https://www.bestcommentaries.com/colossians/>.

<sup>25</sup> “Statement from Zondervan Academic,” *ZA Blog, Zondervan Academic*, November 4, 2016, <https://zondervanacademic.com/blog/statement-from-zondervan-academic/>.

<sup>26</sup> O’Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, liv.

<sup>27</sup> O’Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, 29.

<sup>28</sup> O’Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, xliv–xlix.

midlevel rhetorical units, but where Paul Deterding and N. T. Wright spend time to note the interaction of themes throughout the letter when presenting their analyses of the letter's structure, O'Brien does not. Although the lack of such a summary may well originate from the bounds of the WBC format,<sup>29</sup> O'Brien's commentary would have benefitted from such an analysis.

As O'Brien opens his commentary, he notes that the introductory paragraphs of Paul's letter indicate the themes for Christian living that Paul will develop for the remaining letter. "Catechetical references to long-suffering, the putting on of love, the corporate giving of thanks to the Father (3:15–17), walking in the tradition they had received (2:6; cf. 1:10) and so behaving wisely to those "outside" (4:5) are prefigured in this introductory passage."<sup>30</sup> Throughout his commentary, O'Brien demonstrates a reliance on the logic based on metaphor for Paul's argument.<sup>31</sup>

My thesis seeks to demonstrate the usefulness of metaphor theory to analyze the logic of the text as well as to draw together the specific utterances into a cogent picture of each metaphor in the shape of the whole text. As such, my thesis focuses on the ways that Paul consistently uses the language and underlying logic of each specific metaphor. It neither collapses distinct metaphors into one overall model for Christian living, nor atomizes the specific utterances of the metaphors. Thus I seek to reveal the overall way that each metaphor shapes the exhortation to Christian living throughout the letter.

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<sup>29</sup> Others also have noted the shortcoming of the WBC series: Acadams, June 2, 2012, comment on "Colossians, Philemon [Plagiarism Acknowledged]," Best Commentaries, <https://www.bestcommentaries.com/book/4019/0849902436-colossians-philemon-plagiarism-acknowledge-peter-t-obrien.html>.

<sup>30</sup> O'Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, 30.

<sup>31</sup> O'Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, 72, 171–72, 194, 213.

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY

In chapter three, I defend the methodology followed in my thesis. I distinguish between metaphoric and non-metaphoric language by reviewing contemporary scholarship on metaphor. I explore the narrative underpinnings of metaphoric speech. Then, I present Justin Rossow's dissertation work on the application of metaphor theory, structuralist narrative theory, and metaphor mapping. Next, I develop distinctions between metaphoric utterances of the saving act and of Christian living. Finally, I outline the structure within which these insights will be applied.

#### Metaphor Theory

Justin Rossow builds on Metaphor Theory, a set of cognitive-linguistic theories that grew from research done by Ludwig Wittgenstein, J. L. Austin, Lotfi Zadeh, Roger Brown, and Eleanor Rosch and compiled by George Lakoff in his books *Metaphors We Live By*,<sup>1</sup> *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things*<sup>2</sup> and *More Than Cool Reason*.<sup>3</sup>

#### Metaphors and Categorization

First, the human mind *categorizes* by way of metaphor. George Lakoff writes, “without the ability to categorize, we could not function at all, either in the physical world or in our social and

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<sup>1</sup> Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*.

<sup>2</sup> George Lakoff, *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things*, (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1987). For a summary of the scholarship that led up to Lakoff's conception of categorization, see Lakoff, *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things*, 12–57.

<sup>3</sup> George Lakoff and Mark Turner, *More Than Cool Reason*, (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1989).

intellectual lives.”<sup>4</sup> Categories are a key function of the brain.

We automatically categorize people, animals, and physical objects, both natural and man-made. This sometimes leads to the impression that we just categorize things as they are, that things come in natural kinds, and that our categories of mind naturally fit the kinds of things there are in the world. But a large proportion of our categories are not categories of things; they are categories of abstract entities.<sup>5</sup>

The mind instinctively categorizes abstract entities by their related attributes, and the rest of Lakoff’s *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things* compiles research from multiple cultures on methods of categorization.

Second, the human mind categorizes *by way of metaphor*. George Lakoff concludes that the primary linguistic system use to apply concrete experiences to categories and mental structures is metaphor. He finds that even highly abstract concepts “are often—perhaps always—based on metaphors that have a physical and/or cultural basis... *no metaphor can ever be comprehended or even adequately represented independently of its experiential basis.*”<sup>6</sup>

Metaphor, the logic of one concrete experience applied to something else, is the primary means of conceptualization. The research George Lakoff cites leads him to the conclusions that prove fundamental for Justin Rossow’s methodology. Lakoff’s summary of his own research is worth reproducing in full:

Meaningful thought and reason make use of symbolic structures *which are meaningful to begin with*. Those that are directly meaningful are of two sorts: basic-level concepts and kinesthetic image schemas. Basic-level concepts are directly meaningful because they reflect the structure of our perceptual-motor experience and our capacity to form rich mental images. Kinesthetic image schemas are directly meaningful because they preconceptually structure our experience of functioning in

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<sup>4</sup> Lakoff, *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things*, 6.

<sup>5</sup> Lakoff, *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things*, 6.

<sup>6</sup> Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 19. Emphasis original.



space. They also have an internal basic logic that we believe is sufficient to characterize human reason.<sup>7</sup>

In short, all cognitive processes rely on concrete experience as the foundation for their own power; all thinking receives its structure from concrete experience. The way a person experiences the concrete organizes his understanding of the abstract.

George Lakoff asserts that cognition is based on concrete experience, and its processes quickly and naturally apply to the abstract. Therefore, Lakoff's definition of metaphor encompasses more than simply the divide between concrete and abstract; it applies to any concept that organizes another. Although from concrete to abstract is metaphor's basic move, the application of that basic move goes far beyond. One concept, whether concrete or abstract, can serve as the organizing principal of another concept. For example, the conceptual metaphor IDEAS ARE PHYSICAL OBJECTS<sup>8</sup> is a ubiquitous assumption of academic papers. Based on this assumption, a number of abstract concepts can be given meaning. Without such an organizing concept, propositional language would have no foundation, exert no force, and demonstrate no new avenues of thinking.

Many metaphors are so engrained in the mind of the culture that they stop being understood as metaphor in their own right, instead becoming dead. Using the language of the

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<sup>7</sup> Lakoff, *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things*, 372. Emphasis original.

<sup>8</sup> Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 10–13. At this point, it is useful to distinguish between conceptual metaphors and metaphoric utterances. The thesis throughout refers to both. Conceptual metaphors are set in SMALL CAPS and will follow the form <A> is <B>, e.g., THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH IS A BODY. Conceptual metaphors are semantic domains that include all the connections and correspondences available to the metaphoric concept. For example, I refer to the conceptual metaphor THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH IS A BODY in the entirety of its correspondences, whether or not Paul identifies them by such a title in the text.

On the other hand, metaphoric utterances are the specific utterances of the metaphor found in the text. Paul will develop the conceptual metaphor THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH IS A BODY by referring to some of the correspondences available in the conceptual metaphor and not others. Included in this thesis are the conceptual metaphors DISCIPLESHIP IS A JOURNEY, THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH IS A BODY, THE CHRISTIAN IS AN EMPTY VESSEL, RIGHTEOUSNESS IS NEW CLOTHES, et al.

example above, many may wonder if there could be any other way to describe ideas other than physical objects. These deeply embedded metaphors are in fact the most compelling case for metaphor theory, because while the novelty of the imagery has passed (i.e., the ornamentation), the underlying logic of the metaphor's descriptive power shapes the logic of the discourse.

Thus, with a basis in George Lakoff et al., I turn to Justin Rossow and his broad definition of metaphor: “thinking about, speaking of, or experiencing *one thing* in terms of *something else*.”<sup>9</sup> Metaphor is accomplished when experiences of one sort organize the understanding of another. This basic move of metaphor is called mapping.<sup>10</sup> For example, the conceptual metaphor ARGUMENT IS WAR maps the experiences of war over those of argument.<sup>11</sup> Positions are opposed. Arguments shot down. Arguments are something to be fought, won, or lost; the logical relationships of war overshadow and interpret those of argument.

Since metaphor maps from <something> to <something else>, there are two domains: the Source domain and the Target domain. The Source domain contains all of the organizing material; in the case of the above example, it is the domain WAR, with all the details that WAR entails, which organizes an understanding of ARGUMENT. The Target domain is the domain ARGUMENT, because it is organized by the Source WAR.<sup>12</sup>

If metaphor conceptualizes cognitively, then it is interpreted culturally. “Since communication is based on the same conceptual system that we use in thinking and acting, language is an important source of evidence for what that system is like.”<sup>13</sup> Metaphor cannot be

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<sup>9</sup> Rossow, “Preaching the Story: Metaphor for Preaching” 52. Emphasis original.

<sup>10</sup> Kövecses, *Metaphor*, 7.

<sup>11</sup> Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 4–7.

<sup>12</sup> For a brief list of common Source and Target domains, see Kövecses, *Metaphor*, 18–28.

<sup>13</sup> Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 3.

generally linguistic; it is necessarily tied to the structure of a specific language and culture.<sup>14</sup> For example, although both the English and Hungarian languages share the conceptual metaphors LIFE IS A STRUGGLE/WAR and LIFE IS A GAME, Hungarians are more likely to make the former primary and English the latter.<sup>15</sup> That is, in order to understand the conceptual correspondences and metaphorical utterances that an author would make, the interpreter must have a strong grasp of the conceptual and linguistic correspondences appropriate in that culture. Although the *metaphoric action* of mapping is universal, the *correspondences and utterances* as well as the *concepts related* will vary from culture to culture.

### Highlighting and Hiding

Understanding one concept in terms of another allows the person to order details systematically. The natural privileging of some aspects over others allows the logic of one concept to dictate the importance of concepts in the other. This is the task of interpretation. But because of the Source logic, not only will some details in the Target be highlighted; others will be hidden.

Here also lies a danger to metaphoric conceptualization. Because of its natural ordering properties, it “will necessarily hide other aspects of the concepts.”<sup>16</sup> For example, if American culture understood only the metaphor ARGUMENT IS WAR, then aspects of ARGUMENT (which are objectively part of the Target domain) would be permanently hidden. The aggressive correspondences would be highlighted, and the cooperative portions of argument would be hidden. Or instead, “imagine a culture where an argument is viewed [not as WAR but] as a dance,

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<sup>14</sup> Kövecses, *Metaphor*, 2.

<sup>15</sup> Kövecses, *Metaphor*, 84, table 4.1.

<sup>16</sup> Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 10.

the participants are seen as performers, and the goal is to perform in a balanced and aesthetically pleasing way.”<sup>17</sup> The nature and goal of ARGUMENT has not changed but the culture’s perception of it has drastically changed. In this way, metaphor allows for an ordering of a concept that highlights certain aspects and hides others in order that the hearer may understand the concept in a new light.

My task in this thesis, then, is not to create an overall picture of Paul’s theology of Christian living, thus highlighting certain aspects of Christian living and hiding other valid aspects. Instead, my task is to follow the lines of Paul’s metaphorical understanding of Christian living and demonstrate how the specific inferences and implications of these metaphors provide the underlying logic to his argumentation.<sup>18</sup>

This is important because Paul’s letters not only exhort Christians to live according to his conclusions; they exhort Christians to reason as he reasons. The multiple lines of metaphoric thought ought to be a set of models by which the readers comprehend and evaluate unforeseen challenges. The concepts with which he reasons ought to be the concepts with which his readers reason as well.

Therefore, I will be analyzing the metaphorical utterances of Paul based on synchronic word studies and usage in the Pauline corpus. Since every metaphor has an experiential and/or cultural basis, the context, within Paul’s letter and in the first century of the Greco-Roman world, is of paramount importance. Such correctives are necessary to note for preaching and teaching.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 5.

<sup>18</sup> For an example of an overall picture of Paul’s aims in terms of Christian living, see Walter T. Wilson, *The Hope of Glory: Education and Exhortation in the Epistle to the Colossians*, (New York: Brill, 1997).

<sup>19</sup> See Rossow, “Preaching the Story: Metaphor for Preaching,” 121–32.

## Narrative Underpinnings of Metaphor

Justin Rossow begins with the understanding that metaphor is “thinking about, speaking of, or experiencing *one thing* in terms of *something else*,”<sup>20</sup> and that metaphor is only understandable within a certain cultural schema. To this, Rossow adds that not only does metaphor hold two *things* in duality, metaphor also includes the *relationships, rules, and connections* that underlie those things. In other words, metaphors are images invoked within schema, and the underlying structure guides and constrains one’s reading of the image.<sup>21</sup> For example, the metaphor in which John calls Jesus the “Lamb of God” is different from that referenced in the song “I Am Jesus’ Little Lamb.” “The interpretation of a ‘lamb’ metaphor will change dramatically, depending on whether the lamb is in a *pastoral* setting or a *sacrificial* one.”<sup>22</sup> Thus they represent different characters. In a sacrificial setting, the lamb fulfills its role by being sacrificed for the sake of the people. It finds its context in the Levitical laws and Old Testament temple. In a pastoral setting, the lamb fulfills its role as its shepherd cares for it; it follows its shepherd and lives its days in security. Both metaphors use the same signifier, but they each invoke structures that present radically differentiated meaning.

Justin Rossow continues one step further. Rossow identifies the utterance imbedded within a setting with a certain kind of structured relationship—*narrative* relationship.<sup>23</sup> When metaphor is identified as evoking an underlying narrative structure that gives context and drives meaning, it can be analyzed using the tools of narrative criticism. Each metaphor’s underlying structure invokes a story, with characters and trajectory that allow for its beginning, climax, and ending.

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<sup>20</sup> Rossow, “Preaching the Story: Metaphor for Preaching,” 52. Emphasis original.

<sup>21</sup> Rossow, “Preaching the Story: Metaphor for Preaching,” 39.

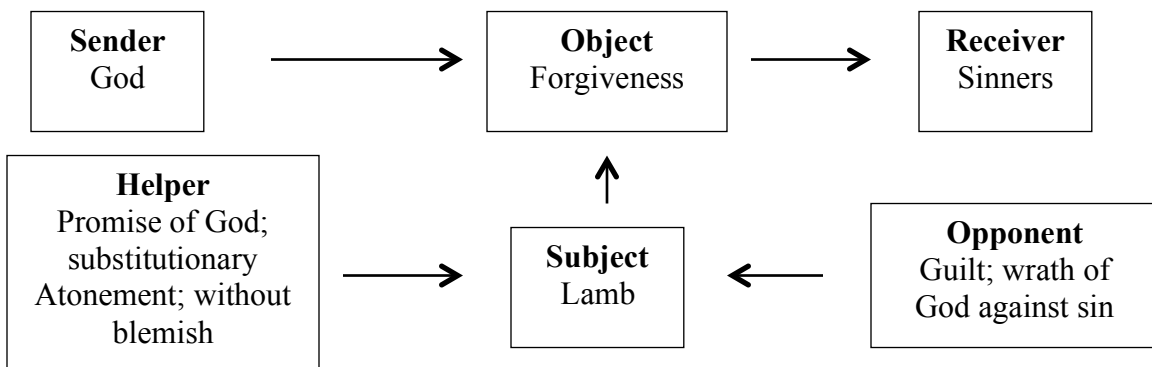
<sup>22</sup> Rossow, “Preaching the Story: Metaphor for Preaching,” 52.

<sup>23</sup> Rossow, “Preaching the Story: Metaphor for Preaching,” 40.

“The result [of his dissertation is] not only a basic hermeneutical description but a narrative method, a basic interpretive tool able to facilitate the preacher’s careful interaction with the biblical text and careful preparation of a sermon in light of how hearers make interpretive decisions.”<sup>24</sup>

Although homileticians (Eslinger, Harned, Long, Lowry, etc.) and linguists (Lakoff, Turner, Johnson, etc.) before Rossow have related metaphor with its underlying narrative context, he furthers the conversation by positing a specifically structuralist set of categories with which to describe narrative relationships, describing the narrative underpinnings of metaphoric utterances in the terms of A. J. Greimas’ work on narrative structures. Justin Rossow writes, “although possible *combinations* of characters and nuances of plot are unlimited, Greimas sought to describe a finite number of relationships that give structure to the particular events presented by any given narrative.”<sup>25</sup> Every story can be reduced to an essential set of relationships, called an actantial model.

Figure 1. Actantial Model for the Source Domain of Sacrificial Lamb.



The Subject (Su) transfers an Object (O) to a Receiver (R). The Object (O) is given to the

<sup>24</sup> Rossow, “Preaching the Story: Metaphor for Preaching,” 37.

<sup>25</sup> Rossow, “Preaching the Story: Metaphor for Preaching,” 45. Emphasis original.

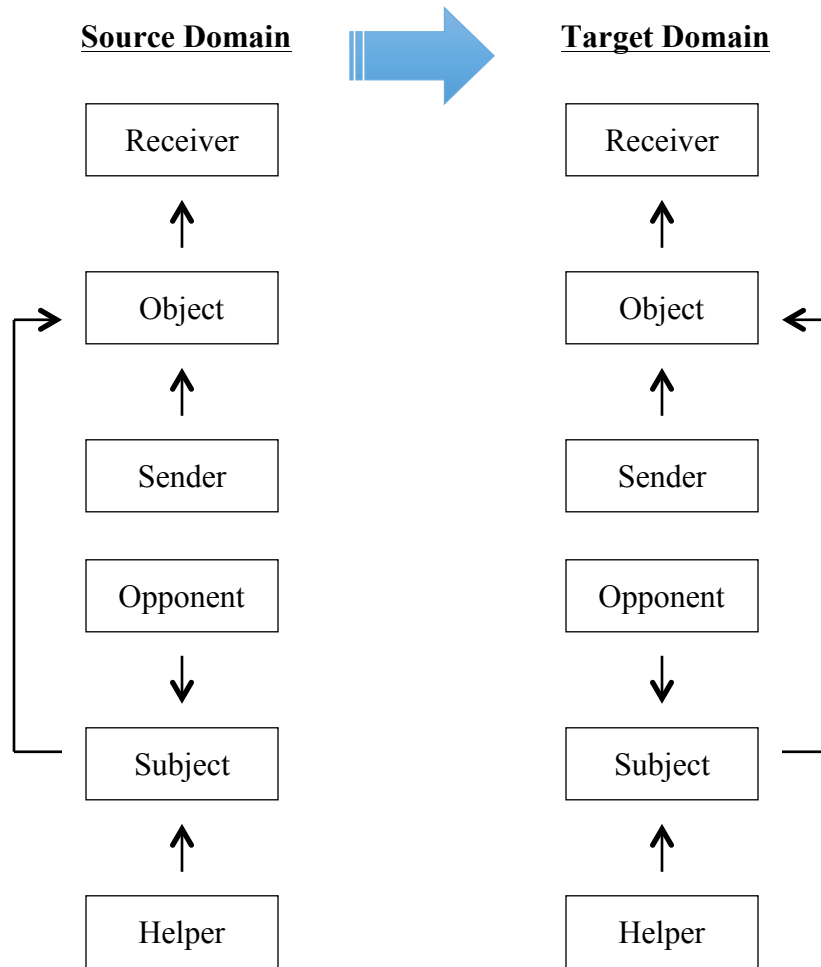
Receiver (R) at the direction of the Sender (Sn). Along the way, the Subject (Su) must overcome Opponents (Op) through the aid of Helpers (H). Justin Rossow applies A. J. Greimas' actantial model to demonstrate all the relationships possible within a narrative (see Appendix A for all methodological diagrams). To revisit the example above, the underlying narrative of the Source (ex. *sacrificial lamb*) involves the Lamb (Su) sacrificed to give Forgiveness (Ob) for the sake of sinners (R), as directed by God (Sn). In doing so, the Lamb (Su) overcomes sinners' guilt and wrath of God against sin (Op) because the lamb without blemish, because of the promise of God and the system of substitutionary atonement (H).

The speaker uses the narrative relationships found in the Source (ex. Lamb and Forgiveness) to order and interpret the relationships beneath that of the Target (ex. Jesus and Forgiveness). Justin Rossow maps the evoked signifiers *in their basic narrative relationships* onto the Target domain. The Opponents of the Source Subject (Lamb) order and interpret the role of the Opponents of Target Subject (Jesus) and so on. Thus, the relationship of Subject to Object (Lamb <sacrificed to give> Forgiveness) is mapped from the Source onto the Target (Jesus <sacrificed to give> Forgiveness).<sup>26</sup> Justin Rossow depicts this by orienting the actantial model vertically rather than horizontally, in order to better demonstrate the influence that the Source domain has on the Target.

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<sup>26</sup> For a detailed development of the actantial model using this example, see Rossow, "Preaching the Story: Metaphor for Preaching," 44–52.

Figure 2. Actantial Model for the Source to Target Mapping.



### Factors in Mapping

There are five dynamics that affect the Source’s mapping onto the Target: correspondence and development, directionality and interaction, and underdetermination.

Correspondence concerns what the author would deem relevant in the Source in order to map to the Target. High correspondence means that the author has a wealth of actors to place in actantial relationships when mapping from Source to Target. Low correspondence indicates that few details in the Source Domain would be appropriate for cross-domain mapping. “Not every



detail of common knowledge about the source or target domain will find a place on an actantial model in narrative analysis.”<sup>27</sup> For example, the height and weight of a sheep are irrelevant in the metaphor of the sacrificial lamb. Indeed, even specifiable actants in the Source domain may not map into the Target domain. In the above metaphor, there would be a role for the High Priest to play, but that potential is irrelevant for the Target domain. It is the interpreter’s task to listen well to the text and sift through the available potentials to discover which relationships are important to the metaphor’s narrative structure.

The general tendencies to which the metaphor lends itself must be balanced by other considerations. Not only do the emphases of the conceptual metaphor matter; the specific metaphoric utterance in the text develops certain actantial relationships. The interpreter must also attend to how the author develops the metaphor in the text. “*Development* refers to how much of either the target or source domain is specifically presented in the utterance itself. Every utterance will leave some blanks; the lower a metaphor’s development, however, the more blanks an utterance leaves to be filled in by the act of interpretation.”<sup>28</sup> High development would include a large volume of details within the text, as in Paul’s metaphor of the body of Christ in 1 Cor 12. Low development would include a small volume of details within the text, as in John the Baptizer’s “Behold, the Lamb of God!” in Jn 1:29.

Directionality supplies the movement of cross-domain mapping. “Cross-domain mapping only happens in one direction: *from* the source domain *to* the target domain.”<sup>29</sup> A metaphor is only interpreted correctly when the Source categorizes the domain of the Target, not the other way around. For example, “if calling God ‘our Father’ results in deifying a male head of household,

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<sup>27</sup> Rossow, “Preaching the Story: Metaphor for Preaching,” 63.

<sup>28</sup> Rossow, “Preaching the Story: Metaphor for Preaching,” 65.

<sup>29</sup> Rossow, “Preaching the Story: Metaphor for Preaching,” 82. Emphasis original.

this is a misuse rather than a natural outcome of the metaphor...<sup>30</sup> In fact, such an example creates a separate and opposite metaphor to that which is found in the text.<sup>31</sup>

Interaction balances the idea of directionality. It states that the author may modify the actors in the Source by his understanding of the Target.<sup>32</sup> For example, in Rom 11 Paul writes in terms of the grafting of olive trees, modifying the Source Domain to fit the Target. Ancient olive growers would not have followed the practice to graft wild olive tree branches onto a cultivated root; they would follow precisely the opposite methodology. As Paul employs the metaphor, he preserves the relationship between Subject and Object, but he modifies the actants of the Source language in order to correspond with the Target Domain (Jesus as the Natural [not wild] Root, Gentiles as the Wild [not natural] Branches).<sup>33</sup>

Although the above is an extreme example, interaction happens to some extent in every metaphor; interaction happens precisely because of directionality. In order to say something more about the Target Domain, the understanding of the Source Domain is modified. For example, the metaphor of the Sacrificial Lamb is modified when the true Target Subject (Jesus) is revealed. Jesus's innocence changes the author's understanding of the Lamb's innocence.

The final factor is underdetermination. It concerns how specifically one may name the actors in actantial position. "What maps in metaphor can be open to a range of possibilities without becoming completely subjective or random."<sup>34</sup> Actors within the model are "neither

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<sup>30</sup> Rossow, "Preaching the Story: Metaphor for Preaching," 84.

<sup>31</sup> This is not to say that a separate and opposite metaphor is invalid; the danger is mistaking one metaphor for its opposite.

<sup>32</sup> Rossow, "Preaching the Story: Metaphor for Preaching," 85.

<sup>33</sup> Rossow, "Preaching the Story: Metaphor for Preaching," 85–89.

<sup>34</sup> Rossow, "Preaching the Story: Metaphor for Preaching," 93.

fixed nor arbitrary.”<sup>35</sup> For example, in the above metaphor I AM JESUS’ LITTLE LAMB,<sup>36</sup> the actantial position of opponent (Op) must have the characteristics of an aggressive hunter of the Subject (Su). The range is not arbitrary; it does not include rabbits, robins, or other lambs. But the range is not fixed. It is not necessary to create an exhaustive list of all the species of bears, lions, wolves, etc..., nor is it necessary to pinpoint which exact predator might be pursuing the lamb in order to understand the metaphor. Underdetermination allows for some linguistic ambiguity in the metaphor while maintaining the integrity of metaphor’s relationships.

These five factors govern the metaphor’s effectiveness in mapping, allowing the interpreter to observe gaps and inferences in the author’s writing.

### **Metaphors of Christian Living**

After having addressed the definition of metaphor and its underlying narrative, I now turn to metaphors of *Christian living*. Paul not only exhorts his readers toward Christian living; his exhortation flows from the underlying narrative logic of his metaphorical description of Christian life. But to understand the Christian life, one must first address how one becomes Christian. For that, I turn to Adolf Köberle’s *The Quest for Holiness: A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Investigation*.<sup>37</sup>

#### The Relationship of the Saving Act to the Christian Life

The significance of the Christian life must be defined in relationship to the saving act. As justification is rightly seen to be an act of God alone, so the first truth of sanctification is that it

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<sup>35</sup> Rossow, “Preaching the Story: Metaphor for Preaching,” 96.

<sup>36</sup> Rossow, “Preaching the Story: Metaphor for Preaching,” 91–98.

<sup>37</sup> Adolf Köberle, *The Quest for Holiness: A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Investigation*, (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2004).

“must also be understood as an exclusive act of God.”<sup>38</sup> Biblical teaching holds fast to the “paradox of exclusive divine action and of entire human responsibility.”<sup>39</sup> God gives his indwelling Spirit and by it deserves all praise for the regeneration of the Christian life even as the Christian progresses in sanctification.

The saving act and Christian living, or as Adolf Köberle terms it, justification and sanctification, have different but related purposes. They are related “as creation to preservation, as birth to growth, or as the sealing of a covenant to the subsequent life lived in the fellowship,”<sup>40</sup> in a way that connects both the activity of God with that of man, even as Köberle’s language distinguishes between the two. Justification comes first “as the moral condition which is essential in God’s sight for the new life,” and “the other [that is, sanctification] is something growing, not a being but a becoming, not a receiving but an increasing, not a state but a movement... [Justification] is an act of divine compassion (*miser cordia*) the second is the beginning of the activity of divine training.”<sup>41</sup> Note well the biblical metaphors of Christian living that undergird Köberle’s description of the difference between justification and sanctification; they are metaphors of living and growing organisms and of athletic training.

Although theoretically justification and sanctification are separable, practically the two are found together as surely as the cross and the resurrection complete one single event. “Because of the common and united operation of the Cross and the Resurrection the answer must always be a twofold one ... the forgiveness of sins carries with it the power of resurrection.”<sup>42</sup> Here Köberle

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<sup>38</sup> Köberle, *The Quest for Holiness*, 95.

<sup>39</sup> Köberle, *The Quest for Holiness*, 146.

<sup>40</sup> Köberle, *The Quest for Holiness*, 96.

<sup>41</sup> Köberle, *The Quest for Holiness*, 96.

<sup>42</sup> Köberle, *The Quest for Holiness*, 90.

expresses the struggle of the Lutheran to faithfully proclaim justification by grace through faith while acknowledging the strong exhortations of both the New and Old Testaments toward the fruit that follows justification.

Adolf Köberle offers three keys to his understanding of sanctification. First, sanctification is characterized by a continual return to the truth of justification. Sanctification is no movement past the point of justification but rather an unfolding of the truth that God has done all that is needful. “It is by just such a humility that is daily born anew in the crucifying fires of justification that man becomes skilled in the service of God.”<sup>43</sup> In sanctification the Christian realizes with humility the depth of his sinfulness, with clarity the breadth of the revelation that the cross of Christ gives to the natural world, and with thankfulness the extent of God’s declaration of his people’s justification.

Second, beyond the negation of sin in a declaration of righteousness, Adolf Köberle distinguishes sanctification as the positive addition of holiness to the life of the redeemed Christian. “The word of the Spirit is directed towards positive ends. God does not stop with the eradication of the evil root; the planting and fruition of a new seed is equally His concern.”<sup>44</sup> As such, the Christian life follows justification just as of Christ’s resurrection follows his crucifixion. When the Christian is made alive in Christ, he begins to set himself to the tasks of life.

Third, sanctification rests on the promises of God. The fruit of the Spirit come to those who have received the gift of the Holy Spirit. “Where, however, the *Christus pro nobis* is preached and believed won without reservation, the new creation is established (2 Cor 5:17). It is as the

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<sup>43</sup> Köberle, *The Quest for Holiness*, 136.

<sup>44</sup> Köberle, *The Quest for Holiness*, 124.

Church of the *Word* that Christianity has the promise that it shall become the Church of *deeds*.<sup>45</sup> These are the promises of the beatitudes. When the people of God suffer for the sake of the righteousness God gave, they are blessed (Mt 5:11–12). When they pray as their Lord taught and commanded them, they are heard (1 Jn 5:14). When they forgive the sins of others as God has forgiven them, God remembers those sins no more (Jn 20:23).

### Christian Living in the Language of Paul

The focus of my thesis is Paul's description of the Christian life and the ways that these metaphors highlight and hide different aspects of Christian living. Most likely those metaphors concerned with describing the saving act will have God as Subject and man as the Receiver, where metaphors describing the Christian life will have man as Subject and either God or man as Receivers. Grammatical clues will include Paul or the Colossians as the subject of the verb and will be included with non-metaphoric imperatives. In fact, the metaphoric language is sometimes so enmeshed in the cultural understandings of Paul that it almost interchangeable with non-metaphoric language. This is to be expected, because metaphoric understandings are basic to language. Finally, Paul also will drive his exhortations toward Christian living by drawing inferences from metaphors that describe the saving act.

Walter T. Wilson is particularly helpful in this regard. He distinguishes between three storylines in Paul's letter to the Colossians: the story of Christ reconciling the cosmos, of Paul evangelizing the Colossians, and of the Colossians having faith in Christ.<sup>46</sup> All of the actors in actantial position are related over each storyline, and the stories of Paul and of the Colossians are

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<sup>45</sup> Köberle, *The Quest for Holiness*, 92. Emphasis original.

<sup>46</sup> Wilson, *The Hope of Glory*, 213.

subnarratives of Christ's story.<sup>47</sup> "In terms of this model, the hallmarks of the story posited by the epistle's symbolic universe appear in the identification of the three mandates and the delineation of how these mandates function together in a coherent manner: God accomplishes reconciliation through the cross of Christ, Paul is commissioned by God to proclaim the gospel, the Colossians are called by God to be baptized and to live in the Gospel."<sup>48</sup> Whereas Walter Wilson describes the overall story of the letter, it is my goal to describe the individual metaphors that run through the letter.

Using the actantial model, I will demonstrate trends in narrative relationships from the metaphors that Paul uses to describe the Christian life. These trends should lead to conclusions about the commonalities and differences in the images that Paul uses to describe the Christian life.

### **Metaphor Theory and Biblical Studies**

So far I have discussed the use of my main hermeneutical apparatus, the actantial model. Now we will move on to three scholars whose works will provide a tripod of support and corrective to my work: Richard B. Hays, Ben Witherington III, and J.A.O. Preus.

#### Metaphor, Intertextuality, and Echoes

Richard B. Hays' work on intertextuality brings valuable corrective to this thesis. Hays describes intertextuality as an allusive echo. "[It] functions to suggest to the reader that text B should be understood in light of a broad interplay with text A, encompassing aspects of A

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<sup>47</sup> Wilson, *The Hope of Glory*, 216.

<sup>48</sup> Wilson, *The Hope of Glory*, 216.

beyond those explicitly echoed.”<sup>49</sup> In other words, intertextuality is not only explicit citation. It is moreover the implicit echoes of resonant texts. Dead metaphors and common images will have narrative underpinnings that implicitly drive the logic of the text. From the perspective of intertextuality, Hays specifies seven tests for hearing intertextual echoes: availability, volume, recurrence, thematic coherence, historical plausibility, history of interpretation, and satisfaction.<sup>50</sup>

(1) Availability. Are the materials available to Paul? “His practice of citation shows that he was acquainted with virtually the whole body of texts that were later acknowledged as canonical within Judaism, and that he expected his readers to share his acknowledgement of these texts as Scripture.”<sup>51</sup> Paul’s metaphors ought to be grounded and noted within contemporary material and Old Testament Scripture.

(2) Volume. Is there vocabulary and grammar that work together to provide the unique footprint of a certain metaphor? “The volume of an echo is determined primarily by the degree of explicit repetition of words or syntactical patterns.”<sup>52</sup> In his study of echoes in Colossians, Christopher Beetham specifies this as shared vocabulary and rare concept similarity.<sup>53</sup>

(3) Recurrence. “Proposed echoes from the same context should be given additional credence.”<sup>54</sup> Paul’s intertextual echoes, whether subtle or stated, should not only find correspondence in one passage from a single text but from multiple passages across the Pauline

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<sup>49</sup> Hays, *Echoes*, 20.

<sup>50</sup> Hays, *Echoes*, 29–31. Hays has been criticized for *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul*, both for his artful form and for his analysis of Romans. In an essay response he addresses these concerns. Richard B. Hays, “On the Rebound,” in *Conversion of the Imagination: Paul as Interpreter of Israel’s Scriptures* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005).

<sup>51</sup> Hays, *Echoes*, 30.

<sup>52</sup> Hays, *Echoes*, 30.

<sup>53</sup> Beetham, *Echoes of Scripture*, 29.

<sup>54</sup> Hays, *Echoes*, 30.



corpus.

The first three factors compare roughly to correspondence and development, but the final four are a valuable corrective for this thesis. They assess the legitimacy of an echo in relation to its structural value in the letter, its coherence to Paul's worldview, and the inclusion of the echo in the writings of other readers within the historic Christian community.

(4) Thematic coherence. "How well does the alleged echo fit into the line of argument that Paul is developing?"<sup>55</sup> The conclusions of an echo must fit within the logic of the passage. They would not be useful to the author if they worked against the argument. For example, if Paul writes using the metaphor of the body, we should expect that his conclusions should also cohere with what we know of his understanding of the body.

(5) Historical Plausibility. "Could Paul have intended the alleged meaning effect? Could his readers have understood it?"<sup>56</sup> Paul's understanding exists consistently within his worldview, and he would develop echoes consistent with that worldview, so that his contemporaries could hear them. "The value of the test is to make us wary of readings that turn Paul into (say) a Lutheran... however odd or controversial a reader of Scripture he may have been, he was a Jewish reader determined to show that his readings could hold a respectable place within the discourse of Israel's faith."<sup>57</sup>

(6) History of Interpretation. "Have other readers, both critical and pre-critical, heard the same echoes?"<sup>58</sup> Intertextuality, whether specified by others or not, should be heard by others and noted in some form. Some of the observations I note in my commentary below are noted but not

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<sup>55</sup> Hays, *Echoes*, 30.

<sup>56</sup> Hays, *Echoes*, 30.

<sup>57</sup> Hays, *Echoes*, 30–31.

<sup>58</sup> Hays, *Echoes*, 31.

expounded by the commentaries. Other observations are collapsed into larger models before their insights are fully explored.

(7) Satisfaction. “Does it produce for the reader a satisfying account of the effect of the intertextual relation?”<sup>59</sup> This question is important for the work of my thesis. The metaphors are not mere ornamentation; they demonstrate the undergirding logic that Paul uses. In the echo of his metaphors, the reader should not only understand the conclusions that Paul reaches; the reader should also be able to reason the way that Paul reasons. Here I find the most important factor for teaching and preaching. In demonstrating the images and stories that undergird Paul’s logic in Christian living, I would provide an avenue to reason as Paul reasons.

### The Relationship of Colossians to Ephesians

Ben Witherington’s work centers on socio-rhetorical analysis of the Epistles. His work will be important for this thesis for its particular emphasis on the rhetorical setting of the letters. The style with which Paul makes his point. I follow Ben Witherington’s work on rhetoric because he suggests a coherent relationship between Colossians and Ephesians that accounts for the unique relationship of similarity between the two letters. He also accounts for the major differences in tone and subtle differences in phrase meaning between the two letters.

Following Bo Reicke, he asserts that “in writing these documents to Asian Christians, Paul made them words on target, partly by adopting and adapting an Asiatic style of Greek rhetoric.”<sup>60</sup> The aim of his commentary is to demonstrate the rhetorical style and effect of Asiatic rhetoric. Asiatic rhetoric, as put forward by Witherington and supported by George Kennedy, ought to be distinguished from the Koine and the Atticizing styles of Greek. Koine “could be called the

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<sup>59</sup> Hays, *Echoes*, 30.

<sup>60</sup> Witherington, *The Letters*, 2.

lowest common denominator” between the wide-flung peoples and languages of the Roman Empire.<sup>61</sup> The Atticizing style of Greek, “a deliberate attempt to emulate Classical Greek,”<sup>62</sup> was used especially by second century Christian writers “when they attempted to do apologetics in a Greek vein.”<sup>63</sup> But, “this is not what we find in the Pauline Captivity Epistles.”<sup>64</sup> Since Ben Witherington finds Ephesians to be the key example of Asiatic rhetoric, I will begin there.

Asiatic style is marked by “a particular kind of sing-song rhythm,”<sup>65</sup> by an appeal to emotions, by a piling on of adjectives, participles, and clauses that not only deliver information but also flow in a pleasing, rhythmical way.<sup>66</sup> Within Asiatic style, there are two subcategories: one “full of wordplay and metaphors, arranged in artificial rhythmic patterns, the other “less flamboyant” yet still with a concern for performance.<sup>67</sup> Thus, it becomes important to hear the letter spoken out loud in order to understand where the rhetorical force is.

What is the relationship of Colossians to Ephesians? They both use the rhetoric of their own region, and they both cover much the same ground with similar word choice and phraseology. Ephesians is a second, circular letter that builds on Colossians’ themes with greater, more exaggerated style.<sup>68</sup>

Ephesians is an epideictic expression of Asiatic rhetoric. “Epideictic rhetoric was the

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<sup>61</sup> Witherington, *The Letters*, 4.

<sup>62</sup> Witherington, *The Letters*, 4.

<sup>63</sup> Witherington, *The Letters*, 4.

<sup>64</sup> Witherington, *The Letters*, 4.

<sup>65</sup> Witherington, *The Letters*, 5.

<sup>66</sup> Witherington, *The Letters*, 5.

<sup>67</sup> Witherington, *The Letters*, 5.

<sup>68</sup> Influenced by metaphor theory, I disagree with Ben Witherington and his citation of ancient rhetoricians insofar as they would relegate metaphor to “ornamentation.” The goal of this thesis is to demonstrate the deep-seated nature of the metaphors within the structure of the Paul’s thought. See Rossow, “Preaching the Story: Metaphor for Preaching,” 242 n. 35.

rhetoric of display and demonstration, of praise and blame in dramatic tones.<sup>69</sup> This makes it highly ornamental, able to tap into the orator's imagination in order to furnish vivid examples, one piled on top of another in order to make his point.

Ephesians has no particular heresy to dismantle. Instead it is a reminder and a re-teaching of known doctrine in grand fashion. "Epidictic rhetoric is not that of debate, discussion, dialogue, or diatribe and is thus unlike forensic and deliberative rhetoric."<sup>70</sup> It does not argue, so it needs only to focus on bringing the hearer to experience the great glory of the orator's object. It ought to bring the hearer to a moment of awe.

Epidictic rhetoric is not focused on teaching new concepts. Instead, it "celebrates what is already true or exists and attempts to inculcate an attitude of awe, respect, even wonder in the listener in regard to these realities."<sup>71</sup> The orator brings to light what the hearer already knows, so that he might experience it in a fresh way.

Colossians is a leaner, deliberative expression of Asiatic rhetoric.<sup>72</sup> It is characterized by exaggeration, redundancy, and conjunctions that allow for long sentences. "The style reflects a deliberative attempt to make this document a word on target for an audience adept in and familiar with Asiatic rhetoric."<sup>73</sup> It becomes deliberative when the reader realizes that Paul's letter to the Colossians is sent to address a specific problem, rather than the *amplificatio* purpose of Ephesians.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Witherington, *The Letters*, 7.

<sup>70</sup> Witherington, *The Letters*, 10.

<sup>71</sup> Witherington, *The Letters*, 7.

<sup>72</sup> Witherington, *The Letters*, 104.

<sup>73</sup> Witherington, *The Letters*, 18.

<sup>74</sup> Witherington, *The Letters*, 106.

## J.A.O. Preus and the Gospel

J.A.O. Preus in his book *Just Words* has done well to express in Lutheran terms the major biblical metaphors used to proclaim the Gospel and their related underlying narratives. He categorizes metaphors of salvation into five major categories: creation, commerce, legal, personal, sacrificial, and deliverance.<sup>75</sup> His work in this area is useful to my thesis in two ways.

First, he sets the precedent for a strong proclamation of the Gospel within the coherent lines of the specific metaphors, distinguishing between the various word pictures that undergird the logic of proclamation. He does well to address the related semantic fields of these metaphors without missing the unique way that each metaphor highlights certain aspects of the Gospel. To add to Adolf Köberle's insights above, the specific and coherent understanding of the aspects of the saving act that Paul highlights in the letter to the Colossians allows his readers to understand the specific and coherent application in the Christian life that Paul highlights.

Second, he provides a clear and structured approach to the expression of the metaphors he presents. Each chapter begins with a short illustration or story, continues with an exposition exploring the biblical witness to the extent of the metaphor, and ends with a few reflective thoughts on that particular proclamation of the Gospel. In the final chapter of this thesis, I attempt to imitate the structure of his book for the metaphors of Christian living and the emphases in the letter to the Colossians. Each section will begin with an illustrative story, followed by a Scriptural examination of the metaphor focused on its use in the letter to the Colossians. I will then describe the Gospel connection of the metaphor and provide an example sermon for the use of the metaphor in preaching.

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<sup>75</sup> Preus, *Just Words*, 34.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **ANALYSIS OF COLOSSIANS**

In chapter four of my thesis, I analyze Paul's use of three metaphors undergirding his reasoning in Colossians: Ἀγών, Σώμα, and Περιπατέω. First, I survey an understanding of the metaphor, its correspondence, and developments within the Pauline corpus. Second, I analyze the text of Colossians for the vocabulary corresponding to the metaphors in order to demonstrate which specific actantial relationships Paul emphasizes in the text. Third, I draw basic conclusions concerning Paul's use of the metaphor.

Where does Paul describe the task of Christian living? What does the reconciled life, united to Christ the firstborn and head, look like? Paul's most explicit references to the description of Christian life are found in the following set of passages: Col 1:1–2, 10, 18, 22, 24, 28–29; 2:1, 6, 9, 11, 17, 19; 3:7, 15; 4:5, 12, 17, 23.

#### **CHRISTIAN LIFE IS ΑΓΩΝ**

The Christian life is Ἀγών. It is a struggle and toil. Throughout his letter to the Colossians, Paul references his own struggle, toil, suffering, and agony on behalf of the Colossian church. Victor C. Pfitzner does well to describe by diachronic and synchronic study the influence of the Greek idea of athletic contest on the vocabulary of Paul.

Pfitzner's diachronic study of the Ἀγών motif reveals that from its earliest mention through the writings of the Stoics, the Ἀγών uses the vocabulary of athletic games to describe philosopher's moral striving against his own vices. "It is by waging a continual battle with himself that the philosopher becomes κρείττων, becomes the victor in the true Ἀγών of life with

its task of gaining ἀρετή, καλοκἀγαθία, and thus εὐδαιμονία.”<sup>1</sup> But, when Pfitzner traces the development of this metaphor in Paul’s writings, he concludes that “*the entire scope of the Agon has been altered,*” and so Paul uses the image in a fundamentally different way.<sup>2</sup>

Paul’s understanding of his struggle leads him toward implications that do not follow the image’s use in extrabiblical literature. “Because [the scope of the Agon has been changed] those offensive features contained in the traditional use of the image are avoided.”<sup>3</sup> This Ἀγών is not a personal virtue; it represents something outside of Paul. It is the Gospel that Paul struggles on behalf of, so that he might spread it to the Colossians and beyond. “This expenditure of his energies—through his concerns, his prayers... and by his letters—are to be understood within the wider struggle for the spread of the gospel and of the faith.”<sup>4</sup> Victory and the end of the struggle come when Paul secures the salvation of all others.

### Overview

Pfitzner’s synchronic study of the Ἀγών motif is based upon three major developments in Paul’s corpus (1 Cor 9:24ff, Gal 2:2, and Phil 2:16)<sup>5</sup> and six minor developments (Rom 15:30, Phil 1:27–30, Col 1:29–2:1, 4:12ff, and 1 Thess 2:2),<sup>6</sup> Pfitzner calls this second set of references

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<sup>1</sup> Victor C. Pfitzner, *Paul and the Agon Motif: Traditional Athletic Imagery in the Pauline Literature*, NovTSup 16 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1967), 28.

<sup>2</sup> Pfitzner, *Paul*, 190. Emphasis original. His observation concerning the Agon motif parallels conclusions later observations by I. Howard Marshall, “The Meaning of ‘Reconciliation,’” in *Unity and Diversity in New Testament Theology: Essays in Honor of George E. Ladd*, ed. Robert Guelich (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 117–32; Stanley Porter “Καταλλάσσω in Ancient Greek Literature and Romans 5: A Study of Pauline Usage,” in *Studies in the Greek New Testament: Theory and Practice 6*, ed. D. A. Carson (New York: Lang, 1996), 195–212. Paul makes paradigmatic changes to commonly held metaphorical understandings when he interprets them through his understanding of the gospel. In Justin Rossow’s terms, when Paul applies a metaphor to the Gospel, the Gospel modifies the metaphor by way of interaction.

<sup>3</sup> Pfitzner, *Paul*, 194.

<sup>4</sup> O’Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, 92.

<sup>5</sup> Pfitzner, *Paul*, 127.

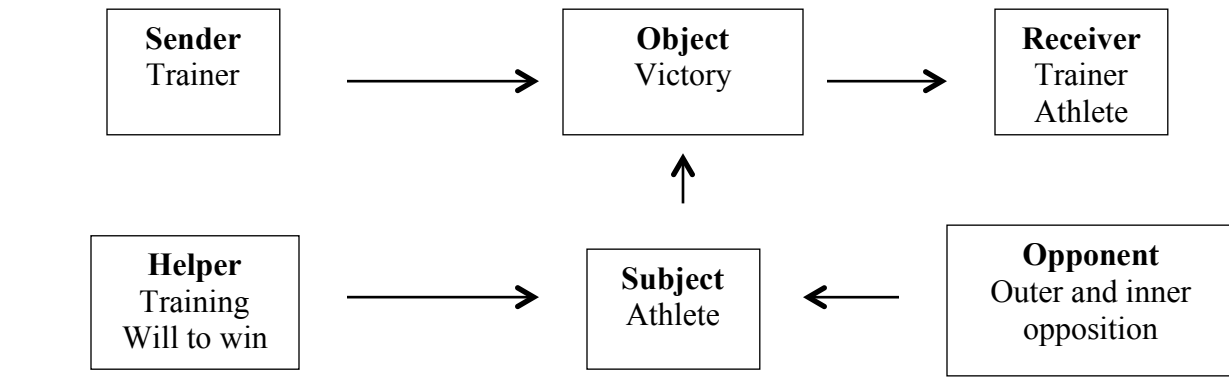
<sup>6</sup> Pfitzner, *Paul*, 109.

“pale termini.”<sup>7</sup> His “most elaborate application of the athletic image in Paul’s letters” is 1 Cor 9:24ff,<sup>8</sup> but the use of Ἀγών termini extends throughout his letter to the Colossians (κοπιάω, ἀγωνίζομαι, ἀγών, βραβεύω) (esp. Col 1:29–2:1, 4:12f).

The following, in summary, are the *features of the Agon for the Gospel*: self-renunciation and training in the endeavour to place everything in the service of the appointed task; with the contest itself the goal which dictates the earnestness of the struggle against opposition and error, the goal being the victory of the Gospel itself; the exertion and wholehearted endeavour and application of the will to the attainment of this goal; the wrestling against the natural opposition of men who refuse to submit to the claim of the Gospel or who falsify it, and consequently physical suffering in the process of this struggle; but also the heavenly prize and crown as the reward of faithfulness.<sup>9</sup>

In actantial terms, an athlete (Su) wrestles and toils to deliver victory (Ob) for himself and the one who trained him (Re). That athlete is aided by his training (H). He is opposed by the severity of the training itself as well as his opponent in the contest (O).

Figure 3. Actantial Model for the Source Domain of Ἀγών



<sup>7</sup> Pfitzner, *Paul*, 109. Pfitzner writes in terms of metaphorical colouring, on a continuum from strong colour to pale colouring to colourless. His terminology is close to that used above of dead metaphor. As noted above, dead metaphor has oftentimes the deepest roots in the logic of language, and an understanding of Paul’s colourless metaphor can be more helpful to the reader than his colourful metaphors.

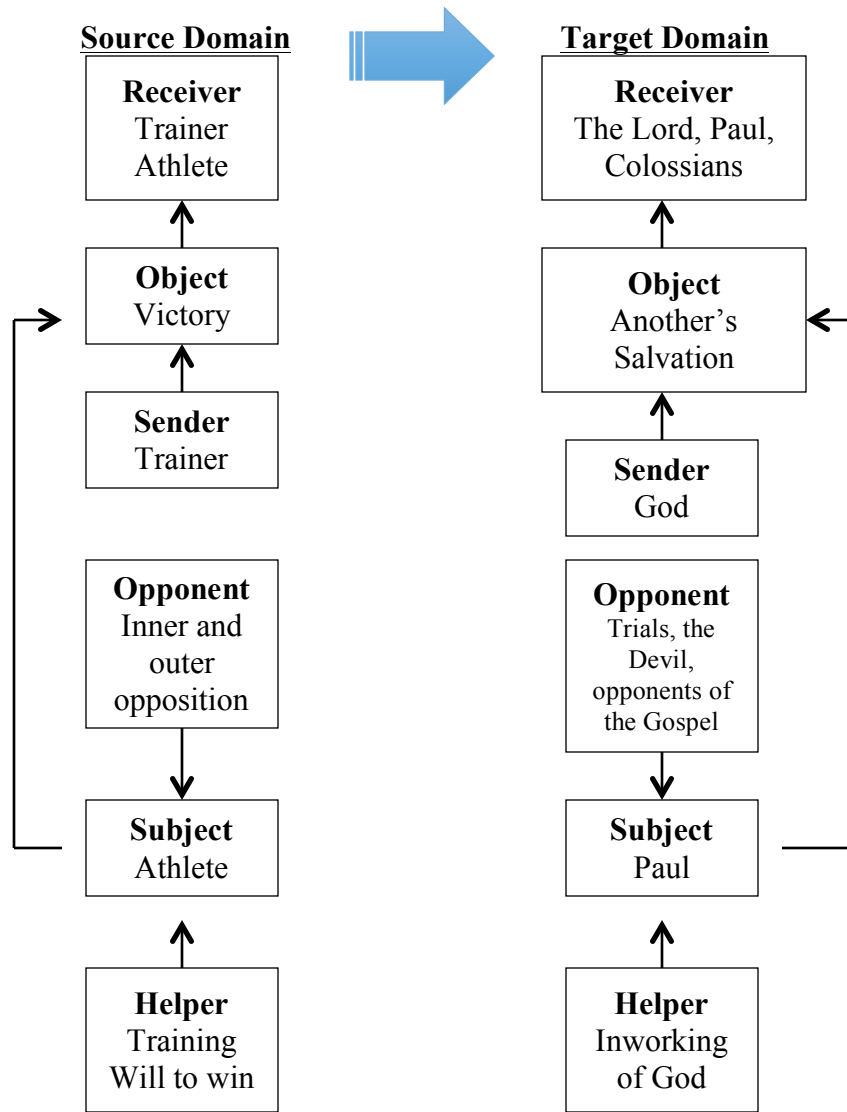
<sup>8</sup> Pfitzner, *Paul*, 81.

<sup>9</sup> Pfitzner, *Paul*, 193. Emphasis original.



When mapped, Paul (with, in some instances, his companions) occupies the position of Subject, delivering the victory (Ob) for the Gospel (Re). Paul is aided by the training given him, and, presumably, his letters were a way that he would pass down this same training to his churches in these letters (H). The opponents of the athlete are the opponents of the Gospel, the trials that Paul faced, and the devil himself (O).

Figure 4. Actantial Model for Source to Target Mapping of Ἀγών.



## Verse by Verse

Next, I analyze the text of Colossians for the vocabulary in order to demonstrate which specific actantial relationships Paul emphasizes in the text. As noted above, Paul's development of the metaphor in Colossians is low, but his pale termini are still to be understood within the logical connections and implications of the metaphor. Analysis includes the references that Victor Pfitzner mentions, as well as wordplay demonstrated by David J Williams, in Col 1:28–29, 2:1, 3:15, and 4:12.

### **Colossians 1:28–29**

*Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he works powerfully within me.*

These verses are found within the first argument, 1:24–2:5, of Paul's *probatio* section, 1:24–4:1. Ben Witherington III notes that 1:28–2:1 form the center of two paralleled rhetorical units: "The Asiatic redundancy is deliberate and does not reflect a lack of literary and rhetorical skill. Notice, for example, the careful balancing in proof. This first proof can be divided into two parts, 1.24–29 and 2.1–5. As Dunn, *Colossians*, pp.128–29, points out, key terms are repeated binding the two sections together."<sup>10</sup> Therefore, the grammar would invite comparison of the relationships in 1:24–29 to 2:1–5.

The initial εἰς ὃ of v.29 connects it to the previous verse, reaching back to designate the goal of Paul's working, the ἵνα clause of v.28, to present everyone mature in Christ.<sup>11</sup> Victory

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<sup>10</sup> Witherington, *The Letters*, 148 n.28.

<sup>11</sup> For a fuller argument on this translation, see Peter O'Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, 89ff. More discussion below.

(Ob) in athletic contest maps to “present[ing] everyone mature in Christ,” or, in Ben Witherington III’s words, “a completely Christlike condition, the opposite of being lost, bound in sin, or alienated from God... to be fully conformed to Christ’s image and so made perfect by means of the resurrection, which puts one beyond disease, decay, and death, beyond sin, suffering, and sorrow.”<sup>12</sup> The first person subject of κοπιᾶω is identifiable as Paul, and the following participle supplements and sharpens the idea of the main verb, to toil in a specific way, “whose root can mean ‘to compete in the games.’”<sup>13</sup> These two verbs describe the relationship between the Subject and Object, the main relationship in the actantial model. Both are verbs of effort: “Both verbs designate the intense labour and efforts of Paul toward the one goal... Although a conscious reference to the athletic Agon is hardly present, it is interesting to observe how the use of the verb ἀγωνίζεσθαι still carries with it its original colouring, the striving after a specific aim or goal.”<sup>14</sup> The toiling and struggling maps back to the verbs of v. 28: Paul’s toil and struggle is to proclaim by warning and teaching.

Paul then modifies ἀγωνιζόμενος with an adverbial phrase. He makes explicit that which enables him to struggle by giving attention to the one who works in him, providing him with the will to do what he needs to do. “Ἐνέργεια is always used in the NT of supernatural power,”<sup>15</sup> and God’s supernatural power powerfully works in Paul. The participle ἐνεργουμένην should be taken as middle rather than passive. It describes in detail the relationship of Subject to Helper, logic that is mapped from Source domain to Target. The final ἐν δυνάμει brings the reader to how powerful the supernatural power of God is. Just as an athlete needs an inner strength to

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<sup>12</sup> Witherington, *The Letters*, 148.

<sup>13</sup> Wright, *Colossians and Philemon*, 97.

<sup>14</sup> Pfitzner, *Paul*, 109–10.

<sup>15</sup> Deterding, *Colossians*, 69.

motivate himself, so Paul is motivated to work by the in-working of the one who works in him with power.<sup>16</sup> The significance of the phrase is twofold. First, it emphasizes in no uncertain terms that God's power is that which works within Paul. Second, it emphasizes that God's power is powerful.

### **Colossians 2:1**

*For I want you to know how great a struggle I have for you and for those at Laodicea and for all who have not seen me face to face.*

As Paul continues with the next rhetorical unit (Col 2:1–5), he begins with a cognate of ἀγωνίζομαι, which reflects the continuation of his metaphor and its underlying logic. He addresses the Colossians, ὑμας, to know his ἡλίκον ἀγῶνα, once again drawing attention to the great effort expended, and in Col 2:1 he further reveals it as a struggle on behalf of others. The following ὑπὲρ identifies those for whom Paul struggles, for not only the immediate ὑμας of Colossians who read his letter, but also for the nearby Christians of the city Laodicea, without distinction between those Christians of Colosse and Laodicea who have met him and those who have not. Paul had founded neither the Colossian nor the Laodicean congregation, and he is not known to have visited them, although he counts among his acquaintances, brothers, and fellow workers several from these congregations.<sup>17</sup> His struggle is for them. In actantial terms, Paul is developing the relationship between Object and Receiver. The Colossians and Laodiceans map to the position of Receiver. Paul strives toward his goal to “present everyone mature in Christ”

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<sup>16</sup> Please note the principle of interaction at work between the underlying narrative of the original metaphor and its use in the text. An athlete's inner drive is arguably his own, but the inner strength provided here is wholly the supernatural power of God.

<sup>17</sup> George B. Caird, *Paul's Letters from Prison: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon, in the Revised Standard Version*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 157–60.

for the sake of those with whom he has a personal connection and those whom he has never met. The subsequent verse follows as a purpose clause, with the same force as the *ἵνα* clause of v.28.

Pfitzner notes that Paul's use of *ἀγῶνα* here implies not only "the Apostle's inner struggles on behalf of his readers with the thought of prayer (*ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν*) predominant" but also "the added thought of conflict and struggle against opposition, a new side to his Agon which arises out of his position as a prisoner."<sup>18</sup> Paul includes in his struggle both his spiritual agony and his physical circumstances, especially his imprisonment and subsequent absence in the flesh from the Colossians and Laodiceans, as he expressed in Col 1:24.

F.F. Bruce<sup>19</sup> and Paul Deterding<sup>20</sup> assert that the opponent to be overcome by Paul's struggle maps to the Colossian heresy and the division it has caused in the congregation, looking forward to Paul's address of the Colossian heresy. The category of Opponent can include both groups of actors. Victor Pfizner focuses on its meaning for Col 2:1 and Bruce and Deterding focus on how it foreshadows the argument that follows.

Although Pfizner comments that the metaphor has not been consciously used, the underlying logic of the dead metaphor continues to shape Paul's argument and his view of the Christian life. Paul demonstrates the actantial elements of the *Ἀγών*, struggling and striving, inner drive and will, and pursuance of a specific goal, throughout the rest of his letter.

Later in the letter, David J. Williams notes potentially related athletic metaphor wordplay between Col 2:18 and 3:15: in Col 2:18 Paul uses the word "καταβραβέω 'to give judgment against.' It is used of a contestant who deserves the prize but is disqualified by the umpire for a

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<sup>18</sup> Pfizner, *Paul*, 110.

<sup>19</sup> Bruce, *Colossians, Philemon, Ephesians*, 90.

<sup>20</sup> Deterding, *Colossians*, 81–85. When F. F. Bruce and Paul Deterding assert the Colossian heresy as the only actantial Opponent, they lose the significance of Paul's phrase, ὅσοι οὐχ ἑώρακαν τὸ πρόσωπόν μου ἐν σαρκί, and Paul's absence from these congregations.

breach of the rules, so that another gets the prize.”<sup>21</sup> He then uses the simple form of the word, βραβέυω, in Col 3:15, “The proper conduct of the games depended on the recognition of [the umpires’] authority, and this is the point of Paul’s plea in Col 3:15: ‘Let the peace of Christ [i.e., the peace that comes through Christ] **umpire** in your hearts.’”<sup>22</sup> Although this word does have connection to ancient game terminology, it is not connected to the Ἀγών metaphorical field specifically, and, as Paul Deterding notes, the vocabulary could be that of judge or of umpire.<sup>23</sup> Victor Pfitzner writes, “the conclusion must be that neither Col 2:18 nor 3:15 contribute towards a picture of the Christian Agon and its prize.”<sup>24</sup>

#### **Colossians 4:12**

*Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, greets you, always struggling on your behalf in his prayers, that you might stand mature and fully assured in all the will of God.*

Paul applies the language of the Ἀγών to Epaphras as well. Paul’s epistolary closing (Col 4:7–18) reiterates the themes of his letter as he relays greetings to and from those connected to the Colossian congregation.<sup>25</sup> “Epaphras has also shared the conflicts which have led up to Paul’s and his imprisonment, and these toils together with the captivity itself are in both cases evaluated in the same way, as a toiling on behalf of the addressees.”<sup>26</sup> Paul’s partners share in the great number of struggles and toils that characterize his ministry, of which intercessory prayer is a

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<sup>21</sup> Williams, *Paul’s Metaphors*, 291 n. 135.

<sup>22</sup> Williams, *Paul’s Metaphors*, 271. Emphasis original.

<sup>23</sup> Deterding, *Colossians*, 113; 136.

<sup>24</sup> Pfitzner, *Paul*, 156. Contra Caird, *Paul’s Letters*, 198.

<sup>25</sup> Witherington, *The Letters*, 201–2.

<sup>26</sup> Pfitzner, *Paul*, 125–26.

part.<sup>27</sup> Such prayer is not wrestling with God or against God, as if God is to be defeated or persuaded; it is rather the intensive act of a Christian life. Whereas earlier, Paul mapped the relationship of Subject to Object by his missionary activities of proclamation, imprisonment, and suffering, here he adds the element of intercessory prayer to the same end. “As a true pastor Paul will not be satisfied with anything less than the full Christian maturity of every believer.”<sup>28</sup>

### Conclusions

After completing an exegesis of these texts, I proceed with five conclusions concerning what Paul is emphasizing within the Ἀγών metaphor for the Colossians. First, Paul’s struggle is intense. Like an athlete training for the games, Paul finds himself not passive before his struggle; instead he actively engages in it to the end that the Gospel would be proclaimed. His activities are intense because they will push him to his limit, and in the end they include suffering that may cost him his life.

Second, Paul emphasizes the motivation for such intense striving, the in-working of Christ. Much like an athlete’s will to win, this in-working acts as a Helper (H) to motivate Paul for the sake of the Colossians. Paul labors “aware that the power for this ministry in the Gospel is not human but divine.”<sup>29</sup> The struggle requires strength of will, but that will is the indwelling and in-working of the Spirit of God.

Third, Paul’s toil is primarily a work of the Gospel, spreading and aiding the Gospel.<sup>30</sup> His

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<sup>27</sup> Pfitzner, *Paul*, 122. Pfitzner’s comments on Rom 15:30 contain insights relevant to this discussion: “It must be denied that the Agon of Paul in which the Roman believers are to participate is *limited* to an Agon of prayer. The context speaks against this claim... They are to support him in this struggle by becoming his co-agonists in prayer to God on his behalf. Consequently the verb is to be understood on the basis of Paul’s own missionary Agon, and not only on the background of a picture of prayer as an Agon.” Pfitzner, *Paul*, 121–22.

<sup>28</sup> O’Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, 90.

<sup>29</sup> Deterding, *Colossians*, 80.

<sup>30</sup> See above for Pfitzner’s explanation.

struggle includes all the intensive efforts of the Christian life: the struggle to continue proclaiming of the Gospel, struggle against false teachers and teachings, struggle against the difficult physical circumstance of imprisonment, and struggle in intercessory prayer from afar.

Fourth, Paul is toiling on behalf of others. The Object (Ob) for which he strives in this letter is the salvation and he desires that the Colossians and Laodiceans (Re) might receive salvation. Proclamation of the Gospel, imprisonment, suffering, and intercessory prayer find their end in the maturity of all in Christ.

Fifth, Paul toils as Subject of this metaphor, and he shares in his toil with other ministers; multiple actants occupy the actantial position of Subject (Su). “Here Epaphras is said to be engaged in the same struggle... the purpose of his struggle on behalf of his fellow-believers at Colossae is phrased in similar terms to the goal of Paul’s own activities.”<sup>31</sup> In his letter to the Philippians, Paul also includes more than ministers; the congregation itself joins in the struggle. As the wrestler, the boxer, and the runner know, the struggle of training is at once both intensely personal and remarkably corporate.

### **CHRISTIAN CHURCH IS Σώμα**

Paul uses σώμα in his letter to the Colossians eight times (Col 1:18, 22, 24; 2:11, 17, 23; 3:15. 2:9 σωματικῶς), and his allusions to the metaphor pervade his letter. As noted by Ernest Best and others after him,<sup>32</sup> the underpinnings of this metaphor rightly expand my analysis not only to include where Paul uses σώμα nomenclature but also to include the phrases “in Christ” and “with Christ.”

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<sup>31</sup> O’Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, 253.

<sup>32</sup> Ernest Best, *One Body in Christ: A Study in the Relationship of the Church to Christ in the Epistles of the Apostle Paul* (London: SPCK, 1955); Deterding, *Colossians*, 23–25; Bruce, *Colossians, Philemon, Ephesians*, 61–71.



## Overview

Ernest Best provides a comprehensive analysis of the body metaphor in his amended dissertation, *One Body in Christ*. I have summarized his conclusions below.

First, the metaphor can be categorized as a metaphor of boundary, and as such, Paul uses it alongside other metaphors of boundary: body, man, bride, building, plant. “This community has a ‘shape.’”<sup>33</sup> This metaphor is concerned not with the outside world as much as the inner system of the body. “The relationship of the Church to the world outside it is never discussed.”<sup>34</sup> The body itself is a closed system, and when Paul develops his terminology, he only considers that which is “in Christ” paying no particular attention to that which is “outside of Christ.” The system requires all its parts, and each part requires the entire system. “No member can grow apart from the growth of the whole, and when the whole grows each member grows.”<sup>35</sup> Anything outside the body is necessarily not part of the body and thus is ignored for the purposes of this metaphor.

Second, the metaphor can also be categorized as a metaphor of the living organism, and as such, it is subject to tensions. A living organism is complete in itself yet experiences growth, has within it interrelated yet distinct living systems, and comes to maturity even as it endures loss. These tensions and distinctions describe the reality of the Church with the subtle complexity of the living organism.<sup>36</sup> For example, the distinction of head and body found in Colossians finds its meaning sharpened when put in tension with the completeness of the entire body.

Third, the body of Christ is no generic body. Although the body is in all respects like any

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<sup>33</sup> Best, *One Body*, 184.

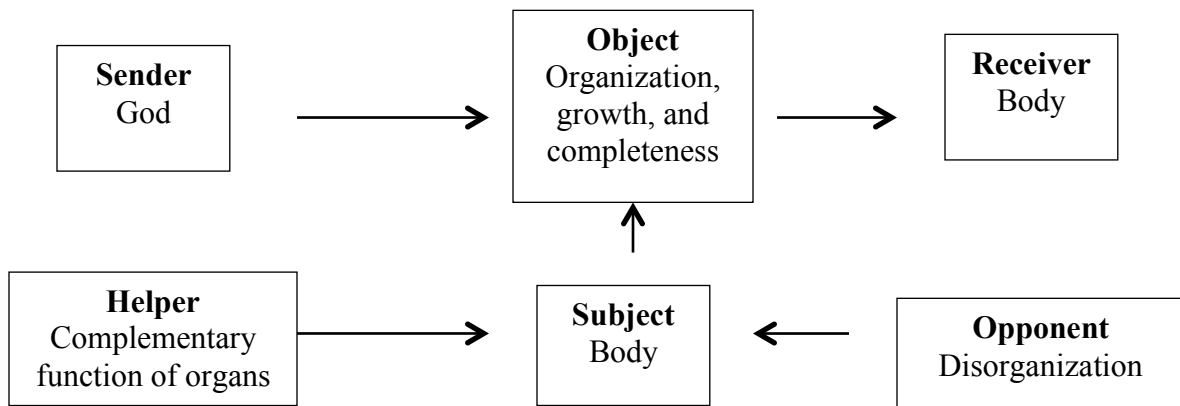
<sup>34</sup> Best, *One Body*, 188.

<sup>35</sup> Best, *One Body*, 190.

<sup>36</sup> Best, *One Body*, 185.

other body, it is named as the body *of* Jesus Christ. “Christians are members of Christ. He fills the Church with all his divine powers and graces. The Church is a full-grown man who is Christ. The Whole Christ is Head and Body. The Church is in Christ.”<sup>37</sup> Paul explicitly and repeatedly maps this in his metaphoric utterances, to the end that the Christian Church, incorporated in the human and divine Jesus Christ, claims the story of Christ dead and risen again as the story of her body.

Figure 5. Actantial Model for the Source Domain of Σώμα



To summarize in actantial terms, the Body (Su) provides organization, wholeness, and growth (Ob.) to the Body (Re). The term body here is used to encapsulate all members, including the head. This is object is directed and designed by the God who designed the body (Sn). The body is helped by the various parts that carry out their specific function (H). When all the parts are doing their specific functions, then the body achieves its object. The body is opposed by disorganization when the various parts of the body are unable or unwilling to carry out their specific functions (O).

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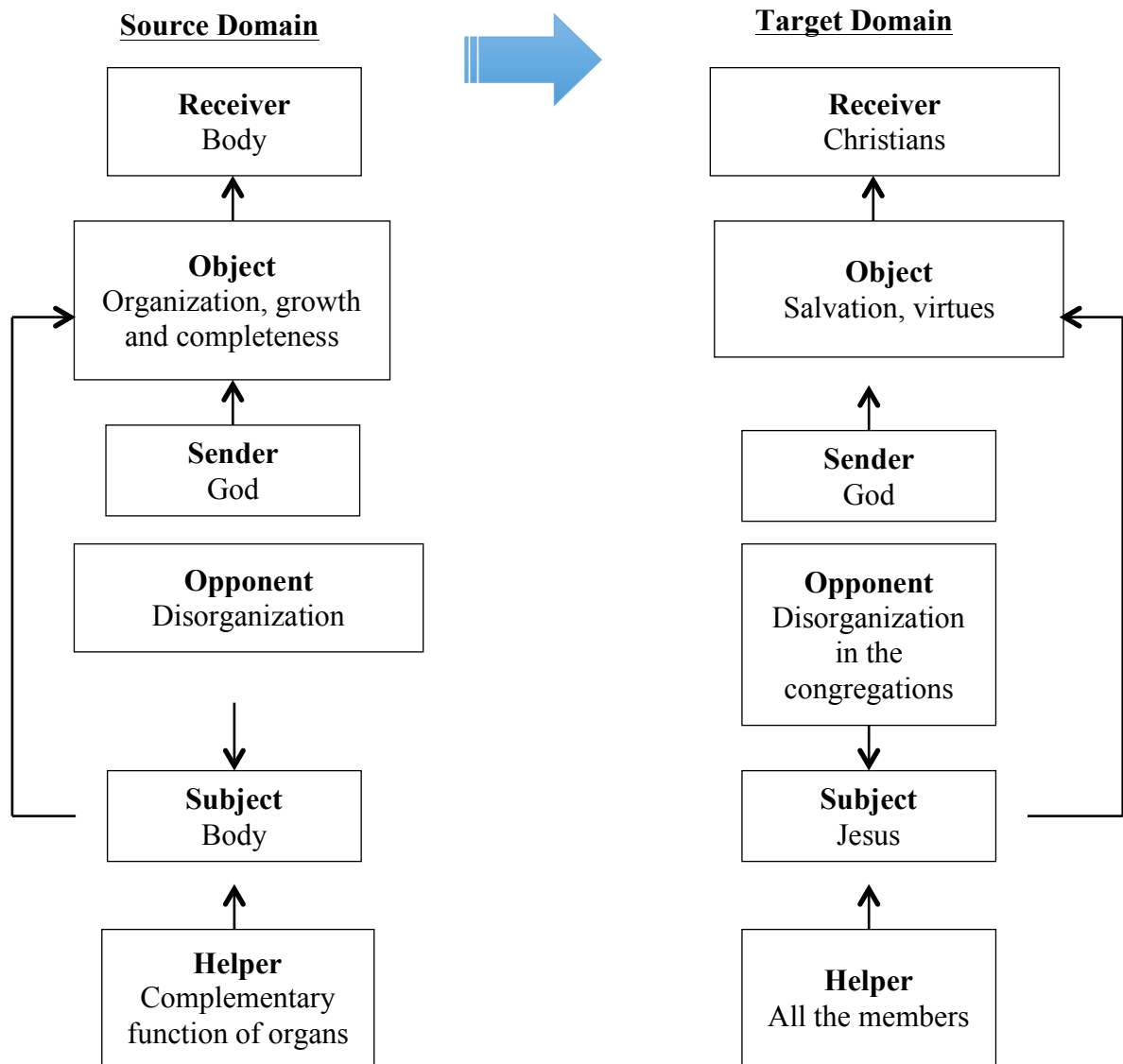
<sup>37</sup> Best, *One Body*, 195.

This metaphor, as Deterding points out, has implications for both the saving act and for sanctification.<sup>38</sup> Jesus (Su) provides redemption, growth, and suffering to all the whole Christian Church on earth (Re). This has been directed and designed by God (Sn). The Christian Church experiences what Jesus experiences. Redemption is a gift given by the Jesus to the Christian Church, because they are connected. As a body grows to maturity as a biological fact, so the Church will grow into Christ. As a one may train the body, but as soon as the training is done the body reverts, so the Church's fitness in virtue is based both on connection to the Body (specifically to the Head) and to its exercise, even as its life in salvation is based upon its incorporation and connection to the Head.

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<sup>38</sup> See especially Deterding, *Colossians*, 153–57 for his discussion of models of growth in sanctification. What he proposes as a Pauline model focuses on baptism as entry into the body.

Figure 6. Actantial Model for the Source to Target Mapping of Σώμα.



Verse by Verse

### Colossians 1:1–2

*Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, to the saints and faithful brothers in Christ at Colossae: Grace to you and peace from God our Father.*

Paul identifies his recipients by the themes that he will develop within his letter using the

standard form of the salutary Greek epistle. He identifies his recipients as holy and faithful ἀδελφοῖς ἐν Χριστῷ. Ernest Best describes ἀδελφοῖς as a “‘social’ plural” which implies that the readers are in relationship with each other, and in modifying the noun with ἐν Χριστῷ he further describes their relationship collectively as a brotherhood gathered by Christ and located in Christ.<sup>39</sup> Encountering the phrase for the first time in this letter, it is important to note that “the phrase does not have a merely instrumental meaning... rather the phrase describes a harmonious relationship with Jesus Christ and baptismal incorporation into the body of Christ.”<sup>40</sup> As Paul develops this phrase, “the formula ‘in Christ’ contains two fundamental ideas: believers are in Christ; salvation is in Christ.”<sup>41</sup> Both ideas are present when Paul uses the phrase and as he develops his train of thought, his specific focus in the letter will become apparent. Paul also uses ἐν Χριστῷ similarly in Col 1:4, 14, 28, 2:3, 10, 11, 15.<sup>42</sup>

### **Colossians 1:18**

*And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent.*

In this passage, Paul gives his first mention of the metaphor of the body. Paul places this phrase within his Christ-hymn. Unlike the poetic forms of Greek or Hebrew, “what is here is rhythmical prose, but it is rhythmical prose with a strophic arrangement such as is found in much

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<sup>39</sup> Best, *One Body*, 2. O’Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, 4.

<sup>40</sup> Deterding, *Colossians*, 23. Others that mention the significance of this phrase agree: it does not refer to the object of belief but rather the relationship. Wright, *Colossians and Philemon*, 50–51; O’Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, 3–4. Deterding makes explicit a connection between this and metaphor of the Body of Christ developed later.

<sup>41</sup> Best, *One Body*, 29.

<sup>42</sup> Deterding, *Colossians*, 24.

early Christian hymnody.<sup>43</sup> As Peter O'Brien notes, scholars agree when identifying the basic similarities between these two strophes, although the exact importance of the correspondences has long been debated.<sup>44</sup> My approach follows F. F. Bruce's interpretation of the parallelism. Throughout, the words of preeminence and authority are important (εἰκὼν, πρωτότοκος, πρό, κεφαλή, πρωτεύω), along with Paul's use of the word πᾶς.

Christ is first located in relation to God and to the cosmic world, as image of God and, in parallel, the firstborn over all creation. Following Christopher Beetham's interpretation of the Col 1:12–14, Exodus language sets up this Christ-hymn leads the reader to understand Christ as the firstborn son of God, the true Israel who would be promised to rule over the house of David forever (for, "it is written, I will call my son out of Egypt").<sup>45</sup>

Christ has the inheritance of the firstborn of God, that is, the authority to rule over all the cosmos. In the corresponding second half of the Christ-hymn, Paul describes Christ in similar language, as head of the body, his church. This use of the genitive is authoritative, with the appositional mapping of body to church at the end. "In the context headship over the body refers to Christ's control over his people as well as the dependence of all the members on him for life and power."<sup>46</sup> Although all these themes are present, I endeavor to tease out the actantial positions of the Body metaphor in this section.

However high the correspondence of the metaphor, Paul's development in the metaphorical utterance of the Christ-hymn is low. The poetic device of the Christ-hymn is not meant to unpack

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<sup>43</sup> F. F. Bruce, "Colossian Problems, pt 2: The 'Christ hymn' of Colossians 1:15–20," *BSac* 141 (1984), 99–100.

<sup>44</sup> See Peter O'Brien for a summary of positions. O'Brien, *Colossians and Philemon*, 32–37. It is my position to take the text as NA provides. Therefore, I will not be discussing potential insertions that modify a pre-Pauline Christ-hymn.

<sup>45</sup> Beetham, *Echoes of Scripture*, 82–85.

<sup>46</sup> O'Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, 50.

the whole meaning of any one of its phrases; instead it is meant as the Christological basis of Paul's argument against the problem of the Colossians.<sup>47</sup> The rest of the letter extrapolates the meaning and implication of the Christology found here.

Two observations attend an analysis of the text. First, Christ's relationship to the cosmos and his relationship to the church, although similar in form, are distinct and separable relationships in this poem; they are discrete actantial models. Christ is proclaimed πρωτότοκος over all creation, all has been created ἐν αὐτῷ,<sup>48</sup> and, being supreme over all, all things hold together in him. Although these parallel the understandings of the Body of Christ, "the 'in' retains its full value of localness."<sup>49</sup>

Second, the relationship of Christ to church is special enough to warrant the unique phrase ἡ κεφαλή τοῦ σώματος τῆς ἐκκλησίας. Ernest Best writes, "We therefore conclude that the Church consists of redeemed humanity, and that the heavenly powers, and all creation, are excluded from it."<sup>50</sup> There is a special relationship between the head and the body that maps to Christ's relationship to the church.

What does that relationship entail? Although Paul does not explicitly demonstrate the implications of his phrase, there are two factors that would allow to me to make a few preliminary remarks. First, there are two ways to take the genitive phrase ἡ κεφαλή τοῦ σώματος. It "may be classed either as an obj. gen. (the 'head' is sovereign over, or the ruler of, the body...) or more generally as a gen. of relation or reference."<sup>51</sup> Although I prefer the first interpretation,

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<sup>47</sup> Deterding, *Colossians*, 47.

<sup>48</sup> For a more detailed discussion of the phrase, see below.

<sup>49</sup> Best, *One Body*, 7.

<sup>50</sup> Best, *One Body*, 126.

<sup>51</sup> Murray J. Harris, *Colossians and Philemon*, EGGNT, (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2010), 42.

either way the Church is placed in the body of which Christ is the head, and her location within Christ allows her to experience the benefits that are found in Christ, namely salvation and incorporation. This observation hints at a more defined relationship between the head and the body, with the head as the one who acts and the body as the one acted upon.

Second, it is useful to place Paul's phrase within the context of the hymn. Paul's utterance introduces the strophe concerning redemption. Ernest Best fills in the gap of the metaphor when he writes, "Christ is not merely Lord of the Church, the Church draws its life from him to whom it is united as body to head."<sup>52</sup> That is, the relationship of Church to Christ, of body to head, is soteriological, as it occupies the point of transition in the Christ-hymn from the strophe of creation to the strophe of redemption.<sup>53</sup>

The insight of Christ as Head and his Church as Body is a step in development from earlier letters. Earlier epistles make explicit the "union of believers with Christ" first and "only secondarily described their relationship to one another, [but] throughout Christ himself bore no special position."<sup>54</sup> In the letter to the Colossians, the metaphor of the body gains a strong redemptive connection with the development of Christ as Head of the Body. "As the Body is nothing without the head, so the Church is nothing without Christ."<sup>55</sup> The metaphor of the body also gains insights into Christian living through its development in the Epistle to the Colossians. "The notion is by no means strange to Paul for Christ and his people are so closely linked ... that on occasion he and they together can be called 'Christ.'"<sup>56</sup> The verses that consider this

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<sup>52</sup> Best, *One Body*, 120.

<sup>53</sup> Deterding, *Colossians*, 48.

<sup>54</sup> Best, *One Body*, 136.

<sup>55</sup> See Best's discussion of the Church, Jesus' body, the Head, and the Body. Best, *One Body*, 137, n. 1.

<sup>56</sup> O'Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, 50.



development (for example, Col 1:24) tend to be those more difficult for commentators to interpret because the commentators struggle between the logic of the metaphor and the wider systematics of Christian teaching.

### **Colossians 1:22**

*He has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him,*

This verse continues in the paragraph after the second strophe of the Christ-hymn concludes. Although the word σῶμα is once again used, Paul “does not regard the two bodies [on the one hand the body of his flesh and on the other hand the body within which the Church is located] as identical, or as different manifestations of the same thing, but as distinct.”<sup>57</sup> Paul’s ἐν τῷ σώματι του σαρκος reveals that he is not only careful to correct the heresy of the Colossians<sup>58</sup> but also to provide the historical events of Jesus’ crucifixion for the development of his metaphoric Source domain both here and in Col 2:11. Thus, his metaphor displays the distinct flavor of the body of *Christ* that will map from Source to the Target domain. The historical narrative of Jesus’ crucifixion serves to fix the metaphor of the Body as Christ’s Body within which the Church is located.

### **Colossians 1:24**

*Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church,*

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<sup>57</sup> Best, *One Body*, 137. F. F. Bruce also has a helpful note on the phrase “the body of his flesh” as a Hebraism denoting the physical body. Bruce, *Colossians, Philemon*, 78, n. 182.

<sup>58</sup> Bruce, *Colossians, Philemon, Ephesians*, 78. It is not the purpose of my thesis to determine the specific nature of the Colossian heresy, only to note the pointed language Paul uses and to examine the heresy as far as its relations to his use of metaphor toward Christian living.

I have demonstrated the structure and context of this verse above. Paul has in view his relationship to the Colossians under Christ and the implications of that relationship. Because Paul is connected to Christ and the Colossians are connected to Christ, therefore Paul and the Colossians are connected together by Christ.

The logic of the metaphor of the Body of Christ guides Paul's argument at two points. First, the relationship of Head to Body gives the benefits of Christ's suffering on the cross, namely redemption, and it does so through Baptism.<sup>59</sup> It is a "baptismal incorporation"<sup>60</sup> that connects the Church to Christ thus allowing her to receive salvation.

Second, the connection made by baptismal incorporation also allows the Church to participate in Christ's sufferings at the present time. "Though presently exalted in heaven Christ continues to suffer in his members, and not least in Paul himself."<sup>61</sup> Not only does the body suffer as Christ suffers; the various members suffer on behalf of each other. "What affects the Colossians affects the apostle and the entire church, and what affects Paul affects them (see 1 Cor 12:12–27). Therefore Paul is able to complete what they lack in suffering by suffering for them in his 'flesh'."<sup>62</sup> The distinction without separation of the Christian's participation in the Body of Christ implies suffering when Christ suffers. Paul, drawn into the Body of Christ through baptismal incorporation, participates in all that the Body of Christ experiences because it is connected to the Head, which is Christ.

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<sup>59</sup> Deterding, *Colossians*, 76.

<sup>60</sup> Deterding, *Colossians*, 76.

<sup>61</sup> O'Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, 80. He provides a detailed summary and analysis of the five major interpretations of this verse. See O'Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, 77–81.

<sup>62</sup> Deterding, *Colossians*, 78.

## Colossians 2:9

*For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily.*

Next, Paul picks up σώμα-language in the body of his argument against the Colossian heresy. Ben Witherington III identifies these verses within the second argument of Paul’s *probatio*, Col 2:6–3:4, with in three subsections: 2:6–15, 2:16–23, 3:1–4. He notes that the reader should have “a sense of the prolix nature of Asiatic oratory with its seemingly endless clauses and phrases and redundancy all the while striving for euphony, accumulation, amplification, and even an orderly arrangement of the overall argument.”<sup>63</sup> His translation interprets Col 2:8–15 as one long sentence.

Paul uses the adverb of manner, σωματικῶς, to describe κατοικεῖ further in relation to Christ’s bodily form at present. “The fullness of deity dwells in Christ ‘in bodily form.’”<sup>64</sup> Christ holds the reality of divinity in his incarnation. “Lohse, 100,101, is no doubt right when he claims that the author chose the word ‘bodily’ in order to relate his statements to the term ‘body’ (σῶμα).”<sup>65</sup> Paul isn’t mapping the metaphor of the Body of Christ in this verse; his language speaks solely of Christ rather than his Church. Instead he is providing Source domain information.

To what end does Paul use σωματικῶς? In the following verse, Paul names Christ as ἡ κεφαλὴ πάσης ἀρχῆς καὶ ἐξουσίας, echoing again the twin metaphors that he set forward in the Christ-hymn of 1:15–20. The Christ who is ἡ κεφαλὴ of his church is also ἡ κεφαλὴ of all that God rules over, because he is τὸ πλήρωμα of the divinity which κατοικεῖ σωματικῶς. The

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<sup>63</sup> Witherington, *The Letters*, 153.

<sup>64</sup> O’Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, 112–13. See his analysis and conclusions concerning five possible interpretations.

<sup>65</sup> O’Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, 113.

implication for this thesis is one of the nature and identity of Christ. The Church's incorporation into the body of Christ is a baptismal incorporation into the incarnation of God himself, who is by virtue of his divinity head over all powers and authorities.<sup>66</sup>

### **Colossians 2:11**

*In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ,*

Paul continues in the same sentence with ἐν ᾧ here echoing its use in Col 1:1–2.<sup>67</sup> He mentions τοῦ σώματος τῆς σαρκός as second in a series of three adverbial phrases describing the work of the divine passive in περιετιμήθητε. Although τοῦ σώματος τῆς σαρκός echoes the similar phrase of Col 1:22, the referent here is certainly the subject of the verb: Paul's audience, the Colossians. The Colossians are incorporated into Christ and therefore experiences all that Christ experienced. Even though the use of σῶμα is not explicitly a mapping of the metaphor, Paul uses the logic of the metaphor of the body of Christ to demonstrate the incorporation of baptism: "We understand [the circumcision of Christ] as a reference to Christ's death, and the words 'you were circumcised' to mean 'you died,' that is, in his death."<sup>68</sup> This logic gives the objective genitive of the next phrase, ἐν τῇ περιτομῇ τοῦ Χριστοῦ, its logical force for the Colossians.

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<sup>66</sup> Best, *One Body*, 119–20. He provides a discussion of three relationships that may be in view: Christ's lordship as ἡ κεφαλὴ over powers and authorities from the perspective of creation, redemption, or eschatological victory. The insight for my thesis is that over and against the discussion of powers and authorities, "when applied to Christ's relationship to the Church [this language] implies union as much as overlordship." Best, *One Body*, 120.

<sup>67</sup> See the discussion of Ernest Best and Paul Deterding above. ἐν ᾧ also appears in 2:12.

<sup>68</sup> O'Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, 116. Unfortunately, O'Brien takes his interpretation of the death and resurrection of Christ over and above an indication of baptism, and he dismisses the idea that the ἐν ᾧ of 2:12 refers to the closest referent. For a full interpretation, see Deterding, *Colossians*, 103–7.

## Colossians 2:17

*These things are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ.*

In the second subsection of the second argument of Paul's *probatio*, Col 2:16–23 “is where the issue is really joined in detail.”<sup>69</sup> Paul stands the σκία against the σῶμα as a “contrast between the two ages,” where the σκία points toward the reality of the σῶμα.<sup>70</sup> “Christ and his new order are the perfect reality to which these earlier ordinances pointed.”<sup>71</sup> With Ernest Best, “we must not fall into the error of assuming that every time Paul uses this word he gives to it its theological undertone – unless it cannot be explained without that undertone.”<sup>72</sup>

## Colossians 2:19

*And not holding fast to the Head, from whom the whole body nourished and knit together though its joints and ligaments, grows with a growth that is from God.*

Paul once again references this metaphor in defense against his opponents, bringing into view the relationship of Subject to Opponent. “Paul’s point is merely that through the ligaments, nerves, muscles, etc., as we should call them, the body is supplied with energy and nourishment and held together as a unity. The head is thus both the source of the sustenance by which the body lives and the source of the unity by which it is enabled to be an organic whole.”<sup>73</sup> Paul claims that those who worship angels, who condemn in matters of eating or drinking are puffed up, holding fast not to Christ but to shadow are outside influences upon the Body of Christ. Just as a body fights off infection, rejects foreign members, and grows when whole, so the Church,

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<sup>69</sup> Witherington, *The Letters*, 151.

<sup>70</sup> O’Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, 140.

<sup>71</sup> O’Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, 141.

<sup>72</sup> Best, *One Body*, 121. Also quoted by O’Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, 141.

<sup>73</sup> Best, *One Body*, 127.

the corporate identity of Christ, would sicken with the introduction of heretical teachings and would grow when connected to her head.<sup>74</sup>

When Paul turns from his negative description of the heretical teachers to the positive description of the Body, he highlights the actantial Object, growth. Growth is a biological fact of life. “The introduction of the conception of growth follows from the biological aspects of the metaphor.”<sup>75</sup> As any farmer or short middle-schooler knows, growth is given by God alone. Growth also finds an end: to be fully-grown, mature, or perfect, and this happens when the Body of Christ reaches maturity in Christ’s *parousia*.<sup>76</sup>

### **Colossians 3:15**

*And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful.*

Paul demonstrates the underlying logic of the metaphor of the Body in Col 3:15, in the middle of his ethical imperatives. The reason to let the peace of Christ arbitrate is because “it is the very nature of their calling to maintain its harmonious welfare.”<sup>77</sup> If the body is connected to Christ its head, then the head “must regulate their relations with one another.”<sup>78</sup> As the Colossians have obtained salvation by being brought into the Body of Christ, so also do they receive the fruits of salvation, in this case, peace, because they are incorporated into the Body of Christ.<sup>79</sup> The peace of Col 3:15 is not an individual’s sense of peacefulness; it is the body whose

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<sup>74</sup> Wright, *Colossians and Philemon*, 128.

<sup>75</sup> Best, *One Body*, 138.

<sup>76</sup> O’Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, 87.

<sup>77</sup> Caird, *Paul’s Letters*, 207.

<sup>78</sup> Bruce, *Colossians, Philemon, Ephesians*, 157.

<sup>79</sup> O’Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, 205.

members act “in harmony” from a singular purpose,<sup>80</sup> just as Paul outlines in the verses preceding (Col 3:12–14) and the verses following (Col 3:16–4:1). The harmony of the body is lived out in the ordering of God’s world.<sup>81</sup>

### Conclusions

After completing an exegesis of these texts, I proceed with conclusions concerning what Paul is emphasizing within the metaphor of the Body of Christ for the Colossians. He utilizes the logic of the ecclesiological metaphor of the Body of Christ both in proclamation of the saving act, as well as in his exhortation toward Christian living; to learn, grow, and mature as a body does.

There is an underlying story to the metaphor of the body, which tugs at the threads of the story of salvation. Paul develops the metaphor of the body extensively throughout his letter. The σώμα has a κεφαλή and μέρος, and it is held together by τῶν ἀφ᾽ ὧν καὶ συνδέσμων. When sin entered into the world, God also sent salvation in bodily form, his son Jesus Christ. Those who are called obtain salvation by incorporation into the body of Jesus Christ through baptism, incorporated into his death and thus becoming alive in his new life.

The essential storyline of the Body of Christ is that we have been incorporated through baptism into the Body of Christ, experiencing all the benefits that come from Christ’s incarnation and his defeat of sin and death on the cross. We, too, experience even now all that he experiences now, rejoicing over and suffering with everything over and with which Christ himself rejoices and suffers. The members of the body of Christ are exhorted to have peace, to experience the benefits of the body of Christ in the fruits of salvation, becoming what they already are in Christ

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<sup>80</sup> Wright, *Colossians and Philemon*, 147.

<sup>81</sup> I owe this insight to Pastor J. J. Stefanic.

Jesus. The members of the body of Christ find their goal in maturity (τέλειος, 1:28). Maturity comes when the body is directed by the head. Paul exhorts the Colossians to clothe the body of Christ appropriately.

First, Paul emphasizes the paradox between being and becoming. This is a paradox well suited to the ideas of growth. The Colossians have all that is needful for salvation and yet Paul strives to present them mature in Christ. The Colossians have the peace of Christ because they are in the Body of Christ and yet Paul exhorts them to let that peace arbitrate in their hearts. In detail, this is found as Paul develops the language of “Christ, the head of his body, the church.”

Second, the metaphor implies that the body offers very little choice for a Christian; there is no option to delay maturity, nor any sense in staying naked. Instead, the natural inclination of the body is to mature, and the only way to survive is to be clothed. Only God can grant this progress, even as it is the Christian’s responsibility to work toward it. The Christian keeps on casting off vice and putting on virtue throughout his whole life.

Third, the body of Christ metaphor allows an explanation for how Paul is not only connected to Christ but also how the Colossians are connected to Christ and how the Colossians are connected to Paul. Not only does Paul suffer and rejoice as Christ suffers and rejoices; each member connected to the head and to each other will share in every sorrow and joy together.

Fourth, this metaphor, despite its high correspondence and development, highlights some correspondences for the saving act and Christian living and hides others. It stands alongside other metaphors describing the Church, perhaps as first among equals. “Paul’s thought was too rich to be contained in one metaphor; the other phrases he uses must be allowed their part in shaping our knowledge of his doctrine.”<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Best, *One Body*, 196.



## CHRISTIAN LIFE IS ΠΕΡΙΠΑΤΕΩ

Joseph Holloway in his dissertation *Περιπατέω as a Thematic Marker for Pauline Ethics* concludes that the metaphor is “his most characteristic term for the Christian life.”<sup>83</sup> It derives “ultimately from an OT and Jewish background. Paul’s letters “contain more than thirty references to **walking** as a metaphor for the Christian life.”<sup>84</sup> Joseph Holloway describes Paul’s vocabulary and placement of this metaphor for describing and exhorting the Christian life as having a “remarkable degree of consistency,”<sup>85</sup> and he finds in the end that “when περιπατέω speaks of the experience of believers in general, it serves to introduce Paul’s basic ethical themes.”<sup>86</sup> In Paul’s letter to the Colossians, “To walk” comes frequently and at key junctures: Col 1:10; 2:6; 3:7; 4:5.

### Overview

Joseph Holloway begins his survey with an analysis of the Hebrew and Septuagint Old Testament, the Pseudepigrapha, the Dead Sea Scrolls, and the writings of Philo and Josephus. The Source domain that Paul accesses in this metaphor is Hebraic in origin. In the Old Testament, **הלך** is used 1547 times and “approximately two-hundred may be considered as

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<sup>83</sup> Joseph Holloway, *Περιπατέω as a Thematic Marker for Pauline Ethics* (San Francisco: Mellen Research University Press, 1992), 1.

<sup>84</sup> Williams, *Paul’s Metaphors*, 198. Emphasis original. Continued: “The verb is usually qualified in some way: (1) Sometimes he expresses the distinctiveness of the ‘walk’ (e.g., its ‘newness’ [Rom 6:4] or its different standards from those of the world [Rom 8:4; Eph 5:8]). In 2 Cor 10:2–3 Paul has the expression twice, each time metaphorically, but in each with a different application. He speaks of some people ‘who think that we walk according to the flesh [live by the world’s standards]. But though we walk in the flesh [live in the world], we do not make war as the flesh [use the world’s ways in our ministry].” (2) Sometimes he mentions distinguishing marks of the ‘walk’, such as ‘good deeds,’ ‘wisdom’ ‘love,’ ‘faithfulness,’ and so on (e.g., Rom 5:7; 13:13; 14:15; 2 Cor 5:7; Eph 5:2, 15; Col 1:10; 4:5; 1 Thes 2:12; cf. Eph 4:1; 1 Thes 4:12), in contrast to former ‘trespasses and sins’ (e.g., 1 Cor 3:3; 2 Cor 4:2; Eph 2:1–2; 4:17; 5:15; Col 3:5–7; 2 Thes 3:6, 11). (3) Sometimes he names its dynamic. The Christian ‘walk’ is only possible because of Christ.” Williams, *Paul’s Metaphors*, 198.

<sup>85</sup> Holloway, *Περιπατέω*, 223.

<sup>86</sup> Holloway, *Περιπατέω*, 223.

metaphors or figurative.”<sup>87</sup> On the other hand, in Hellenistic literature reference to walking as a metaphor for life is rare at best.<sup>88</sup> The LXX’s translation of *הלך* generally translates any instance of the verb into the Greek *πορεύομαι*, and this is largely consistent with usage in the Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, the Dead Sea Scrolls, and the writings of Philo and Josephus. When used metaphorically, “it is almost always further qualified to give some definition to the sort of life that is being described... either negative or positive.”<sup>89</sup>

On the other hand, Paul’s general and consistent choice of *περιπατέω* is distinct from the LXX choice of *πορεύομαι*.<sup>90</sup> “That Paul has chosen a rarely used term to convey a familiar metaphor suggests the importance of that metaphor for him and that its use is intentional and significant.”<sup>91</sup> Whatever his reasons to create separation from LXX usage, Paul has made a clear choice to be distinct in his vocabulary.

Holloway’s synchronic analysis of the metaphoric *περιπατέω* examines twenty-four instances in Paul’s letters.<sup>92</sup> Because the metaphor of walking is so deeply engrained in the culture, Paul spends the bulk of his time not by demonstrating the logic of the Source domain but instead mapping that culturally available logic directly to the Target domain. Joseph Holloway summarizes his conclusions in three points: “the worthy walk (1) has its basis in, (2) is integral

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<sup>87</sup> Holloway, *Περιπατέω*, 1. Holloway does well to note the instances and grammatical associates of the verb, but he does not distinguish between conceptual domains.

<sup>88</sup> Holloway, *Περιπατέω*, 18.

<sup>89</sup> Holloway, *Περιπατέω*, 18.

<sup>90</sup> Holloway, *Περιπατέω*, 9. He continues, “Out of the over two-hundred times that *הלך* is used figuratively, *πορεύεσθαι* is used approximately one-hundred sixty times to translate it in the LXX. All ten instances of *εὐαρεστεῖν* as a translation of *הלך* *אנאטרעפן* is used figuratively two times for *הלך*... Out of the twenty-four instances when *περιπατέω* is used to translate *הלך* it is found in the figurative sense only four times at most. In any case, it is obvious that *πορεύεσθαι* is much favored over *περιπατέω* to translate *הלך*, not only in general but also when used as a metaphor.” Holloway, *Περιπατέω*, 9.

<sup>91</sup> Holloway, *Περιπατέω*, 25.

<sup>92</sup> 1 Thes 2:12; 4:1, 12; 2 Thes 3:6, 11; 1 Cor. 3:3; 7:17; 2 Cor. 5:7; Gal 5:16; Rom 6:4; 8:4; 13:13; 14:15; Phil 3:17; Col 1:10; 2:6; 3:7; 4:5; Eph 2:2, 10; 4:1, 17; 5:2, 8, 15.

to, and (3) takes its shape from the saving activity of God in Christ.”<sup>93</sup> Five insights found within the body of his work are summarized below.

First, the Christian walk begins at baptism and finds its destination at the eschaton; the focus of the metaphor is the Christian’s sustained direction as he walks through life. “The present situation of the believer is one where they are claimed by the new age; yet they must live out that claim in the face of the powers of the old.”<sup>94</sup> The Christian reorients himself to the starting point and the destination in order to reach his destination, and he does so continually throughout the journey. “Paul does not here depict life in its isolated moments of decision and action but *general orientation and overall commitment*.”<sup>95</sup>

Second, this metaphor is used to describe both the salvific act and the Christian life. “When the Galatians hear that they are to walk in the Spirit, they know that this is the Spirit by which they began their Christian lives ([Gal] 3:3), the Spirit that God provided on the basis of faith.”<sup>96</sup> The vertical action of God for salvation serves as a model for horizontal relationships, because “the outworking of God’s saving power will be consistent with its initial decisive expression.”<sup>97</sup> The believer’s journey in the Christian life reflects the truths of his salvation in the present reality even as he journeys toward the eschaton. It is both indicative and imperative; it is both “kerygma and didache in this respect.”<sup>98</sup>

Third, this metaphor highlights the Spirit’s role of guiding and leading the Christian. Not

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<sup>93</sup> Holloway, *Περιπατέω*, 224.

<sup>94</sup> Holloway, *Περιπατέω*, 140.

<sup>95</sup> Holloway, *Περιπατέω*, 131. Emphasis mine.

<sup>96</sup> Holloway, *Περιπατέω*, 101.

<sup>97</sup> J. D. G. Dunn “The Theology of Galatians,” SBLSP 27 (Atlanta: Scholars, 1988), 1, quoted in Holloway, *Περιπατέω*, 101.

<sup>98</sup> Holloway, *Περιπατέω*, 229. Emphasis original.

only does the Holy Spirit empower the Christian to walk in faith; the Spirit “is also to be a normative factor in determining their conduct.”<sup>99</sup> Paul’s use of the language *κατὰ πνεῦμα* and the dative *πνεύματι* demonstrate how the Christian lives in a Spirit-guided and Spirit-led walk.

Fourth, this metaphor is one of corporate Christianity. In Rom 13:13, Paul’s use of *ἔσχημόνος* “reflects Paul’s concern for the health and integrity of the body of Christ.”<sup>100</sup> He uses this not of the individual’s walk of faith but rather the journey of a whole people toward a common destination.

Fifth, the Christian life walks by God’s standards of conduct for the mutual edification of believers and for witness to outsiders. “The repeated emphasis is that the Christian walk is very much located in the present world with all the givens of human existence—relationships, suffering, work, sex, buying and selling—but that the Christian walk must take as its norm and standard the goal of pleasing God, of doing his will... rather than merely human standards of measurement.”<sup>101</sup> The walk is guided by God’s standards and for the benefit of the walking companions and of outsiders.

Although it would be too much to say that Paul had the specific journey of the Exodus in mind every time he used this metaphor, parallels between his use of the walking metaphor and the story of Exodus illustrate the metaphor in a helpful way. Christopher Beetham, doing work on scriptural echoes<sup>102</sup> in Colossians, asserts that Col 1:12–14 echoes the soteriological themes of

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<sup>99</sup> Holloway, *Περιπατέω*, 101.

<sup>100</sup> Holloway, *Περιπατέω*, 144.

<sup>101</sup> Holloway, *Περιπατέω*, 93.

<sup>102</sup> Christopher Beetham’s technical language develops the work of Richard B. Hays to include three modes of literary reference between source material and Paul’s letters. From explicit to implicit they are: citation, allusion, and echo. An echo is “A subtle literary mode of reference that is not intended for public recognition yet derives from a specific predecessor.” Beetham, *Echoes of Scripture*, 24. Yet Beetham notes: “If, however, a reader also recollects the source text, he or she may discover unexpressed links that suggest rich stores of otherwise unnoticed insight.” Beetham, *Echoes of Scripture*, 22. I will not much spend space ‘mirror-reading’ the Colossian heresy as the purpose

the Exodus. “Paul is not echoing any *specific* text, but evoking a whole OT theme or tradition, the foundational event of Israelite history.”<sup>103</sup>

Among the words that evoke the story of Exodus are μερίς and κλήρος, as well as ἀπολύτρωσις. Conceptual triggers include the ideas of oppression, of slavery and of freedom.<sup>104</sup> The concepts of fatherhood, inheritance, rescue, transference, redemption, and forgiveness are crafted together intentionally to evoke this Exodus narrative. “None of the words point to the exodus event *on their own*... it is when the terms are put together in a certain way that they form the echo.”<sup>105</sup> Here, we find the movement of the entire passage to be important. To see the salvation-act in terms of Exodus, not only must the elements of Exodus be there, but their structure and form are important. God indeed had chosen his people Israel *before* their rescue. His promise to them was not only that they get *out of* oppressive Egypt, but also *into* the Promised Land that he had prepared for them (Ex 6:6–8). His people were bought with a price and that price released them (Ex 12).

In Col 1:12–14, Paul gives the context within which he would have the Colossians read the Christ-hymn. “In verses 12–14 the focus shifts from prayer for the Colossians’ future well-being to the work of salvation accomplished in the gospel message.”<sup>106</sup> It is a transitional section which bridges the gap between Paul’s *exordium* and his *narratio*.<sup>107</sup>

But this picture of rescue from Exodus is bigger than simply the historical event. Paul has

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for this echo of Exodus. Rather, the bulk of our time will be spent on the limits and interactions between metaphors and within the echo of Exodus language.

<sup>103</sup> Beetham, *Echoes of Scripture*, 81. Emphasis original.

<sup>104</sup> Beetham, *Echoes of Scripture*, 81.

<sup>105</sup> Beetham, *Echoes of Scripture*, 82. Emphasis mine.

<sup>106</sup> Petrus J. Gräbe, “Salvation in Colossians and Ephesians,” in Van der Watt, *Salvation*, 288.

<sup>107</sup> Witherington, *The Letters*, 128.

broadened the language of the Exodus in preparation for the universal claims made in the Christ-hymn: echoing Egypt, he writes ἐκ τῆς ἐξουσίας τοῦ σκότους and echoing the conquest of the Promised land he writes εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ υἱοῦ τῆς ἀγάπης αὐτοῦ.<sup>108</sup> Christ is the firstborn over all creation, the Savior, and the sacrifice not only for those who went through the Exodus event but also for all who have been baptized into his name. “With the concepts of *salvation* and *cosmology* we touch upon two themes central to the letter to the Colossians.”<sup>109</sup> His authority is universal, and the effects of his salvation, although effectively described in Exodus language, span cosmologically beyond the scope of that story.

Paul raises these points against opponents with which “salvation and cosmology were very closely linked.”<sup>110</sup> Even without a thorough analysis of the four authorities named in Col 1:16, they plainly express the wide dominion of Christ. Here in the Christ hymn, “the scope of redemption is the entire world... Verses 15–20 emphasized that Christ’s rule encompasses all things.”<sup>111</sup>

The Colossians have now been brought into an Exodus narrative that reaches cosmologically to touch not only all people but also all creation. In Col 1:21–23, Paul further affirms “that the proclamation of the good news is made to all the world.”<sup>112</sup> Reconciliation and salvation are worldwide, enjoyed by any and all that are under the authority of the Son. “Like a sovereign making a proclamation and sending off his heralds to bear it to the distant corners of his empire, God has in Jesus Christ proclaimed once and for all that the world which he made

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<sup>108</sup> Bruce, *Colossians, Philemon, Ephesians*, 50–51.

<sup>109</sup> Gräbe, “Salvation in Colossians,” (Van der Watt), 290. Emphasis original.

<sup>110</sup> Gräbe, “Salvation in Colossians,” (Van der Watt), 291.

<sup>111</sup> Gräbe, “Salvation in Colossians,” (Van der Watt), 293.

<sup>112</sup> Gräbe, “Salvation in Colossians,” (Van der Watt), 293.

has been reconciled to him.”<sup>113</sup>

Paul uses the logical inferences to describe the Christian life. Not only does he widen the metaphor to describe the cosmological scope of redemption; he also applies it as he exhorts the Colossians in their Christian living.

In Colossians the worthy walk requires the abandonment of vices that hinder community and the adoption of qualities that support life together (3:5–17). The household code is a reminder that the worthy walk takes place not in ascetic existence, but in the context of relationships (3:18–4:1). Colossians reminds believers that the worthy walk means a transformation of life together that the outside world can observe. It is no accident that the final admonition of the letter’s parenthesis is for a walk “in wisdom before those who are outside” (4:5). Outsiders should be able to notice that a walk guided by the wisdom of God revealed in Jesus Christ makes possible a life of community where racial, cultural, and national boundaries are irrelevant (3:10–11).<sup>114</sup>

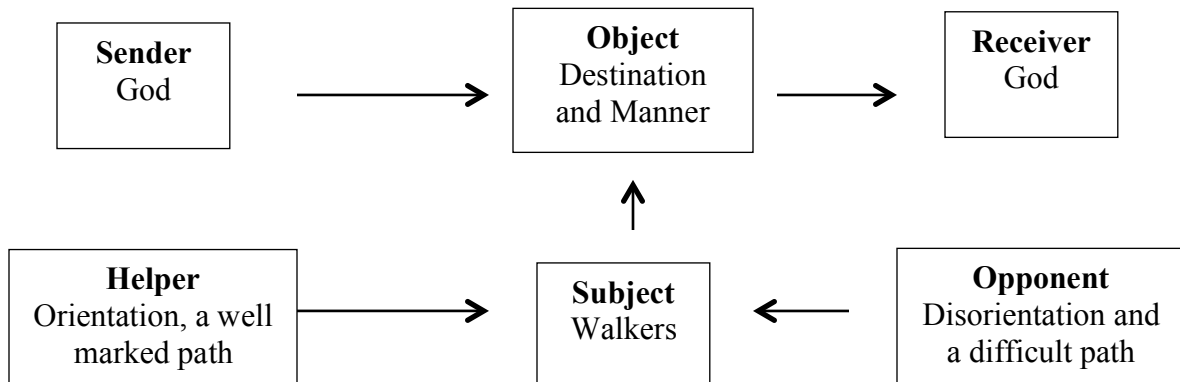
As in the Exodus, God guides his people as they walk together along the path that began in their redemption from slavery in Egypt and ends in the destination of the Promised Land. Before their journey began, God made them sufficient for an inheritance. He rescued them out of darkness. On the way, God gives them ethical standards of conduct. On the way, God teaches them how to walk. His people are opposed by their own disobedience, a harsh environment, and, at times, their own guide. As they walk, God reorients them by pointing back to what he has done and forward toward their destination. They are already transferred into the kingdom of his beloved son even as they journey to the Promised Land.

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<sup>113</sup> Wright, *Colossians and Philemon*, 89–90.

<sup>114</sup> Holloway, *Περιπατέω*, 236.

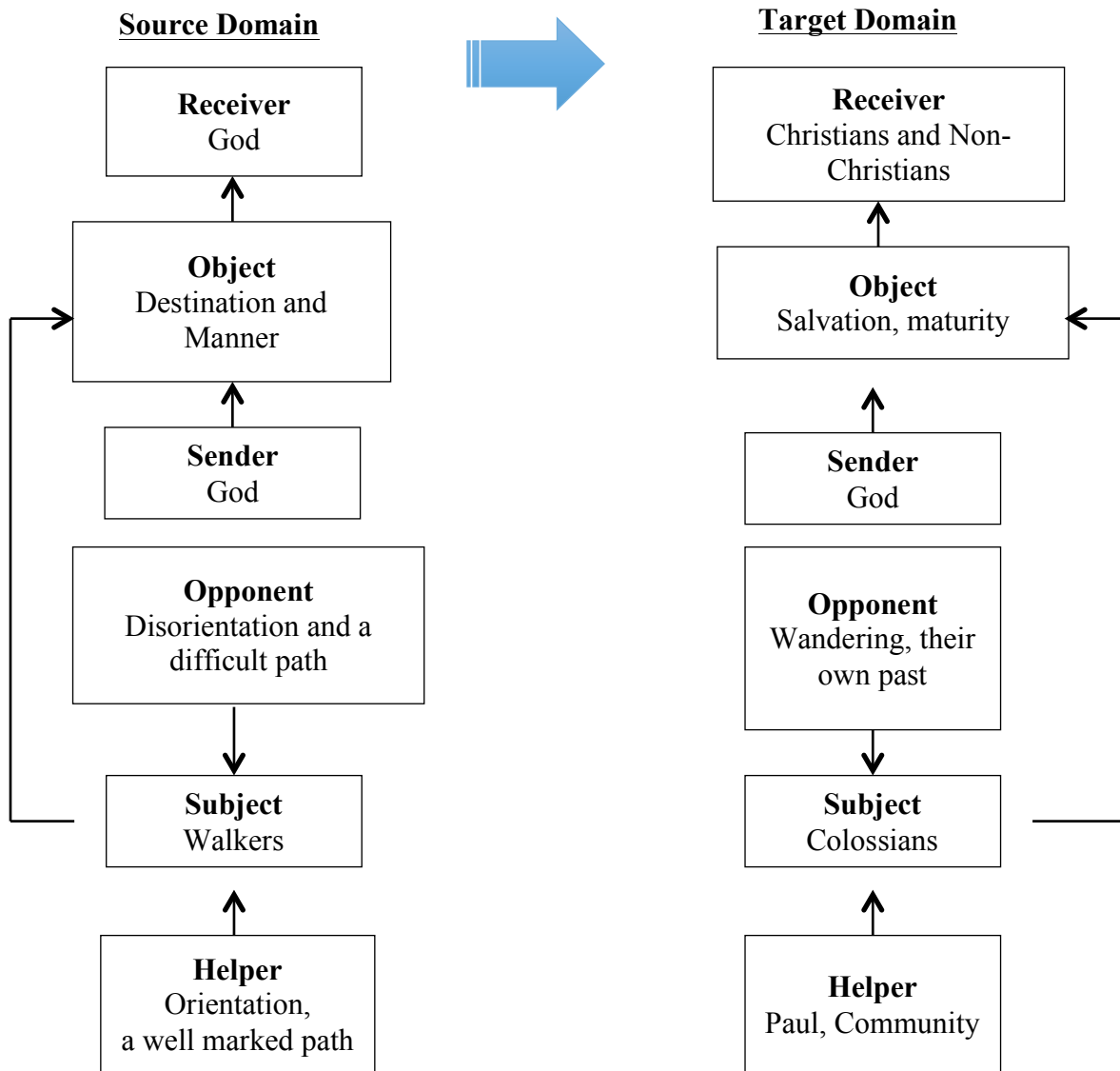
Figure 7. Actantial Model for the Source Domain of Περιπατέω



In actantial terms, the Walkers are the Subject (Su). They travel together. They are helped by constantly being reoriented on the path by both their origin and their destination (H). They are opposed by unclear direction, by a long and difficult path, or a path that is unmarked (Op). The walkers have been sent on their walk by another (Sn), and the walk is done for the sake of the neighbor and even for all of creation (Re).



Figure 8. Actantial Model for the Source to Target Mapping of Περιπατέω



Verse by Verse

**Colossians 1:10**

*So as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;*

Although there is disagreement on precisely how Col 1:1–2:5 fit together, the commentaries generally find these verses to be introductory to the body of the letter, with a

greeting (Col 1:1–2) followed by thanksgiving (Col 1:3–8) and intercession (Col 1:9–12a), transitioning (Col 1:12b–14) to the Christ-hymn (Col 1:15–20) applied to his audience (Col 1:21–23) and ending with Paul’s personal testimony and his pastoral concern (Col 1:24–2:5).<sup>115</sup> Paul’s intercession “spells out the content of his intercessory prayer report.”<sup>116</sup> Verse 10 is grammatically subordinate to the main clause, οὐ παυόμεθα προσευχόμενοι καὶ αἰτούμενοι, and to the content of that prayer delivered by the ἵνα clause.<sup>117</sup> The aorist infinitive περιπατῆσαι signifies the result of being filled with knowledge with living out God’s will. “Paul prays that they may increase in knowledge of God’s will, with the result that the Colossians will live as God wants them to and so increase in the knowledge of God! Understanding will fuel holiness; holiness will deepen understanding.”<sup>118</sup> Paul modifies the infinitive with an adverb of manner, and further, the adverb is modified by a genitive of respect, both expressing the standard of the Christian life being God’s standards.<sup>119</sup> The following clause, εἰς πᾶσαν ἀρεσκείαν, modifies the whole ἵνα clause, describing the purpose of God filling and his people walking. Actantially, if ὁ κύριος is the standard to which the walk’s worthiness must attain, then ὁ κύριος is both Sender and Receiver in the metaphor. The Lord and his character are both the aim and the impulse of “walking.” The Lord’s people walk “from” the Lord, “to” the Lord, “to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord.”

Since it has been established that this was a common metaphor for his audience, Paul’s emphasis in this verse is on mapping the manner in which the walking is performed. He does not

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<sup>115</sup> Wright, *Colossians and Philemon*, 47.

<sup>116</sup> O’Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, 18.

<sup>117</sup> O’Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, 20.

<sup>118</sup> Wright, *Colossians and Philemon*, 62. Contra O’Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, 19, who sees this as a purpose clause.

<sup>119</sup> O’Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, 22.

develop the metaphor but instead develops his mapping to the Target domain, in fourfold fashion: “in all that is pleasing, in every good work, bearing fruit and increasing in knowledge of God.” Thus, the destination of the walking is not the focus of this phrase, instead the worthy manner of the walking becomes the focus.

### **Colossians 2:6**

*Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him,*

The second instance of περιπατέω comes in Col 2:6, widely regarded as the heart of the letter:<sup>120</sup> Ὡς οὖν παρελάβετε τὸν Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν τὸν κύριον, ἐν αὐτῷ περιπατεῖτε. Paul’s short syllogism draws together the act of salvation and the challenge of the Christian life.

Walking in him is contingent upon first receiving him. Without receiving Christ as Lord, a person cannot walk in him. The present imperative connotes continuing action and is supplemented once again with four participles: rooted, built up, established, and abounding. To walk is the natural outworking of receiving Christ as Lord. Again, the metaphor of walking organizes the other metaphors both grammatically and conceptually. In addition, the walker is exhorted to continue walking in the same sort of direction in which he has been walking.

Again, the metaphor of walking is not developed in the Source domain as much as the concepts of the Target Domain. In Col 2:6, Jesus is revealed as the κύριος named previously. It is for the sake of Jesus Christ, and all that has made him Lord—his life, death, and resurrection—that provide the impetus for the walk. Jesus and his claim to lordship directs him to send the Christian on her journey. Each of the subordinate passive participles in the following verse support the idea that Paul is making explicit the agent or Sender (Sn) of the action.

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<sup>120</sup> Holloway, *Περιπατέω*, 175.

### Colossians 3:7

*In these you too once walked, when you were living in them.*

Next I turn to Paul's admonition in the household code. The metaphor is mentioned in passing as he develops his paraenesis by use of put off / put on language. ἐν οἷς refers back to either the δι' ἃ or the ἐπὶ τοὺς υἰοὺς of verse 6.<sup>121</sup> "The walking metaphor in 3:7 is also in a 'once'/'now' schema."<sup>122</sup> Walking maps to living. "The walking metaphor here summarily describes the pattern of the former life of the Colossians before they 'stripped off the old man' and 'put on the new.'"<sup>123</sup> The only actantial relationship revealed for the Christian life is that of Opponent (Op). The steep challenge to their Christian life is the life that they used to live. The manner, origin, and destination of their walk before Christ followed a trajectory that they no longer share. The complex blend of metaphors in this section will be explored in greater depth below.<sup>124</sup>

### Colossians 4:5

*Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time.*

The final instance of the περιπατέω comes before Paul's final greetings (Col 4:7–18) in Paul's peroratio (Col 4:2–6), recalling the themes of the *propositio* (Col 1:22–23).<sup>125</sup> "Paul concludes the paraenesis of this letter with an eye on the ongoing mission of the church as

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<sup>121</sup> Bruce, *Colossians, Philemon, Ephesians*, 144. The ESV translation chooses the former interpretation, since it is likely that the latter is from early manuscripts harmonizing this passage with similar material from Eph. 2:2; 5:6.

<sup>122</sup> Holloway, *Περιπατέω*, 181.

<sup>123</sup> Holloway, *Περιπατέω*, 181.

<sup>124</sup> Note for now how the metaphor of the body of Christ, the stripping off of clothing, and walking point toward the greater story of baptism.

<sup>125</sup> Witherington, *The Letters*, 197.

carried out by both himself and his readers.<sup>126</sup> The verb is once again modified. Ἐν σοφίᾳ echoes a major theme of Colossians. It “sums up the parenthesis in 3.5–4.1”<sup>127</sup> pairing ideas found previously in 1:9–14 and 2:6–7. “This general principle is applied more directly to the issue of the Christian’s speech (4:6).”<sup>128</sup> Note the parallels between wisdom and worthiness. Περιπατεῖτε appears once again in the present imperative, as in Col 3:7, and connotes a continuing walk.

Another actor also comes into play: one reason for a walk in wisdom is for the sake of the outsider. “Paul’s admonition ... reflects his two-fold concern that they be strengthened in their relationships with one another and that they present a worthy commendation of the gospel to the outside world.”<sup>129</sup> The Colossians should walk in wisdom for the sake of those who walk the same path they once walked, so that outsiders might turn from their ways to join those who walk in wisdom. The final phrase modifies the imperative as well, indicating the urgency of the command in light of eschatological realities.<sup>130</sup>

Paul in Colossians emphasizes the *manner* in which the walker walks. Nowhere in Colossians is the destination of the walker mentioned. The instruction and interpretation of the Scriptures by the apostle Paul is the help that demonstrates a clear, if difficult, path that lies ahead of the Colossians. Within the logic of this metaphor, Paul wants the Colossians to be making distance in the right direction by walking in a way worthy of God.

## Conclusions

A few observations emerge concerning Paul’s usage of the metaphor of walking in

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<sup>126</sup> Deterding, *Colossians*, 177.

<sup>127</sup> Witherington, *The Letters*, 197.

<sup>128</sup> Deterding, *Colossians*, 179.

<sup>129</sup> Holloway, *Περιπατέω*, 184.

<sup>130</sup> Deterding, *Colossians*, 177–78.

Colossians. First, the Source Domain is rarely accessed. This is most likely because the idea of walking is so heavily engrained in the minds of his hearers that the mere mention of the word would evoke a consistent schema within which to reason. Because the logic of life as a journey is engrained in the minds of his hearers, walking is often organizing other metaphors. This web of interrelated metaphors provides the basis for Paul's conceptual reasoning.

Second, the metaphor of walking certainly highlights the conduct of everyday life. Just like a journey takes a long time, so life is a long time. Just as you are directed on a journey, so God directs you in your life. Just as your journey will have an end, so life has an end. Just as a journey has a specific path with specific parameters upon which a person will travel, so there are markers and limits in life that allow for the journey from start to finish. Using the logic of the metaphor of walking, Peter O'Brien writes, "Bad theology *leads* to bad practice."<sup>131</sup>

Third, walking is not related merely to practical conduct. Paul "can use the walking image in a wider sense than just that of practical conduct."<sup>132</sup> The metaphor of walking highlights the continuing influence that the saving act has in the present. The saving act, like a compass, always orients the traveller to his direction. The saving act is the point of origin just as the eschaton is the destination.

Fourth, the metaphor of walking hides certain aspects of God's work and the Christian's life. The inevitability of life everyone inexorably draws nearer to the same fate. It also hides the randomness of life. The metaphor of walking assumes a progress and clear path that are not always the case.

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<sup>131</sup> O'Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, 137. Emphasis mine.

<sup>132</sup> Holloway, *Περιπατέω*, 22.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### TEACHING AND PREACHING

The actantial model as a hermeneutical device has advantage for the homiletician. In organizing the background data of a passage in the form of a story, the homiletician will find a natural movement towards vivid, biblical preaching, a strong illustration of the text's main point, and a host of images and subplots to fill in the gaps. Following the general structure of J. A. O. Preus's *Just Words*, I develop short stories, scriptural exposition, and conclusions concerning each metaphor's connection to the saving act and to Christian living.

#### THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IS AN ΑΓΩΝ

For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me. For I want you to know how great a struggle I have for you and for those at Laodicea and for all who have not seen me face to face, Col 1:29–2:1

“Ok, you can take five,” said Terry’s trainer. Terry bent over, breathing hard. “But keep moving around. Don’t sit down. We’ve got more to do.” They were only halfway through, and Terry thought he was going to collapse. His legs felt like jelly. His lungs were on fire. He didn’t think he could make it another minute. He didn’t think he could even keep standing.

Last month, he’d had a scare. He felt pain in his arm and in his chest, so his wife rushed him to the hospital and they put two stents in. The doctor told him he had two choices: he could either shape up or ship out. So, he joined a gym, hired a trainer, and started a training program. The first day he showed up, the trainer asked him what his goal was, and he said, “I just don’t want to die.” When he limped home after that first session, he felt like he was already dead.

For the next month, he sweated more than he ever had before. He came home soaked and

sore every night. Today, halfway through his training, he almost hung up the towel. But then he remembered his family and his wife, and that gave him the inner drive to finish.

At the end, gasping, he asked his trainer, “Isn’t this supposed to get easier? Why aren’t I getting any better?” The trainer looked up and said, “You can’t tell? The first time you came in here, you could barely do a pushup. I remember you saying you got winded bending down to tie your shoes. Now you’re keeping up with your kids, and you’ve made your whole family healthier. It might not feel like it, but you are miles away from where you once were.”

“What a gift this life is!” Terry thought. “That God would give me back my life, and give me such a reason to keep on living!”

On his drive home, the sermon from last week popped into his head: “For this I toil struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works in me. For I want you to know how great a struggle I have for you...” (Col 1:29–2:1a). Paul struggled day after day, praying and working and witnessing and suffering on behalf of others, because the Spirit of God was working in him. He toiled for another with the strength of Another. Is that what the Christian life is about?

### The Christian Life as Struggle and Striving

The Christian life is like the training of an athlete. In his letter to the Colossians, Paul uses this metaphor and its logic as he speaks of the continual, day-to-day toil of the Christian life.

Like Jacob struggling against God, like Moses struggling to hold up his hands, like the agony of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, the Christian life can be characterized by struggle, agony, and strife. Not only does Paul characterize life as a struggle; he specifies it as training: a disciplined set of routines performed for a specific end. The Christian is like an athlete competing in an event, like a runner running a race, like a wrestler in training. Paul tells the Galatians that they “had been running well (specifically, in their obedience to the truth of the



gospel) but someone played foul and caused them to stumble.”<sup>1</sup> Paul appeals to his congregations to stay faithful so that “I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain.”<sup>2</sup> Paul’s effort was toward a specific end: the spread of the Gospel and the maturity of those who believed in it.

As any athlete can tell you, no athlete can ever be satisfied that he has “arrived.” Paul is continually thanking God (Col 1:3) continually in prayer (Col 1:9), toiling to see others built up (Col 2:1–2), struggling and striving so that the power of the Gospel is known (Col 2:12) in a daily struggle with Epaphras on the behalf of others (Col 4:12). There will never be a day in this life when you won’t need to contend with your sinful nature, love others before yourself, struggle in prayer, or suffer for others. But as any new gym member will repeat under his breath, it isn’t so much how much you can lift; it’s the consistency of coming in day after day.

The disciplines of the Christian life include those activities for which the Christian must set aside time: prayer, Bible reading, and fasting. They include a lifestyle that prioritizes this time and an effort to incorporate the fruit of these activities in all the vocations of life. The opponent is sometimes God himself, struggling with our God in prayer. Other times our opponent is the challenge of living in a sinful and flawed world. Our opponent can also be the challenge of life as a sinful and flawed person, pouring effort into the techniques and disciplines without having a plan to improve. But a truth of our Christian life is the effort it takes to keep on training in every chapter of life to fix our eyes ahead.

We are not alone in our Christian struggle. Just like a runner can have several different partners that he runs with, the Christian toils alongside others. Just like a weightlifter will follow an incremental plan to improve her sets without injury, the Christian is called to mark out the

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<sup>1</sup> Williams, *Paul’s Metaphors*, 268.

<sup>2</sup> Williams, *Paul’s Metaphors*, 270.

future and follow a plan for growth. Just like a person recovering from surgery does not figure out physical therapy on his own, the Christian looks to mentors and guides to provide advice and counsel.

### The Gospel Connection

Christ has already run your race for you. When Jesus “set his face toward Jerusalem,” he endured, struggled, and strove on our behalf. He, “who for the joy set before him endured the cross, despising the shame” (Heb 12:2) has wrestled death to the ground and won. God works through your training, blessing what he will bless.

God grants the desire to train (Col 1:28). It’s his energy working powerfully in us that gives us the motivation to want to strive against our sinful nature and for the sake of others. The divine energy comes *extra nos* through the external word into our hearts in Baptism, and again and again through the preaching, teaching, and absolution. Through the means of Grace, we are given the strength to serve our neighbor. The Gospel that has saved us enlivens us to hold fast to the Hope that holds us in the palm of his hand.

### Sermon—Come to Me

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Our sermon for today encompasses two texts: first from Matt 11, “Come to me all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest, and from Col 1, “For I want to you to know how great a struggle I have for you...”

Dear friends in Christ,

Just today, we laid a dear, dear saint to rest. Martha Kintzel. In the year that Martha was born, Hitler’s party was coming into power. When she was five years old, Hitler was named chancellor. As a school-aged girl she remembers shaking the hand of Adolph Hitler, when she

was seventeen, the war was just ending. In her late teens and early 20's the Russians were swooping through the countryside raping and ravaging. When she was twenty-seven, she and her husband Ludwig were getting married. In the 1950's he was a coal miner and the coal mines were in their heyday. They were blessed with three children, living in new housing in a new town, at age thirty-three the Berlin wall was getting built, and at age forty-one she and her family were moving to Minnesota.

Martha for the most part didn't seem to want to talk about years of war and death and despair, but one author wrote about how Berlin was divided, people were living amidst the destruction, and everyone was hungry all the time, nine million German men killed, and women and children suffering atrocities worse than death.

So much that Martha wouldn't talk about or didn't want to talk about. But perhaps it is her silence on the troubling chapters that makes what she did say so much more powerful. She didn't volunteer much about her past, but she did want people to know the love of Jesus gets us through all the tough days. She didn't spread around the story of her hard life, but she was very bold to say where she found her strength and her hope. She was very bold to say in times of tiredness, she knew where she could find rest.

Where do you find rest? We think of Christ's words... "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly of heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden light." He's looking for the weary and the burdened. He's looking for the exhausted. He's looking for those who need rest.

I remember my summers at camp during my college days. I would get done with the college semester exhausted. Long nights at the library, lots of caffeine, little sleep, strange

schedules, bad food, reading, typing, and sitting. It was exhausting. I needed rest. But then, I would go to camp.

I remember that our days would start as the sun rose and we would be watching children until late. My days were full of canoeing and swimming, full of silly games and Bible study, full of walking miles and miles and miles through the woods... making breakfast, lunch and dinner over the fire. Full of hot and humid days, sunburns, wind and weather, it wasn't altogether pleasant every day, but it was full.

My summers at camp were exhausting but of a different kind. Not so much of late nights and caffeine but full days and tasks well done. Not so much of writing papers and taking tests, but the questions of campers dealing with real life.

Why is that?

Both are a kind of tired but not all exhaustion is created equal. Both are hard on a person's body, but in different ways. One demanded I use my mind to its fullest; the other demanded I use my mind, my body, my soul. There were different kinds of tired.

And I tell you that to tell you this: it seems in our American context, as we walk through life, we will all be exhausted and tired, but it seems that it's easy to be the wrong kind of tired. What do I mean by that? Tired from working too many hours, too tired to take time for our Savior. Tired from keeping up our image, too tired to cultivate real relationships. Tired from consuming our media, too tired to listen well to what our neighbor is saying. Tired of putting up with others, too tired to struggle in prayer for them. Tired of defending our honor, too tired to confess our sins.

I imagine that Jesus, he's looking for us to be the right kind of tired.

Today, I would invite you to be the good kind of tired. Be exhausted, exhausted because of

how difficult and rewarding it is to love others in their lives, and how much struggle it takes to love them well. Be frustrated, frustrated because of the honest toil and care you have for the people in your life that you know are in God's hand even when they don't do what you told them to do. Be tired and exhausted, beyond the point of tears from toiling in prayer for others. Be worn out and weak from agonizing with the power that your God works in you. Be hungry and thirsty for righteousness.

Come the right kind of tired, because as often as you come, you receive the right kind of strength. It's not a strength of muscle, or a strength of mind. It's not a strength of individualism, or a strength of solidarity. It's the strength of a Savior, looking down the barrel of his betrayal, crucifixion and death.

It's a strength in the Gospel, given by the One who is strong enough to wrestle our death to the ground for us. It's a strength that emptied itself to the point of death, even death on a cross. It's a strength given to us every time we eat the bread which is Christ's body and drink the wine which is Christ's blood.

He gathers us together, weak and worn, so that he can feed us with food that fills. He gathers us, exhausted and spent, so that his promises might be our resting place. He gathers us, toil and work and agony and all, so that he can renew us, refresh us, lift us up, restore our will and instill in us an energy that works powerfully within us....

For the sake of our neighbor. So that this place would be a gathering place for all the tired, all the weary, and out these doors at the end of our God's Divine Service to you, you would be energized to toil in care for your neighbor. You would be energized to wrestle in prayer for the voiceless. You would be strong to love the widow and orphan and the foreigner, so that next week, you can come exhausted once again to receive the only strength that matters.

This is the hope held out to Martha for all the days of her life. This is the hope held out to Paul in his good days and in his bad. This is the hope taken physical form before you, the hope spoken into your ear in this hour, the hope of the table set with a foretaste of the feast to come.

The kingdom of heaven is like a large church in a small town, full of folks whose Savior is their strength. They toil. They care. It is exhausting. They get tired. Day after day, week after week, they gather to the Sanctuary to receive rest, and day after day, week after week, they are sent out with the strength of the Lord to do the work of the Lord. Amen and Amen.

### **THE CHRISTIAN LIFE AS THE ΣΩΜΑ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΥ**

Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we might present everyone mature in Christ, Col 1:28

Heather sighed as she looked at her list of names. This was going to be a long trip. Her youth group was supposed to go camping for ten days in the middle of nowhere, and she knew it was going to be a tough one. Most of the kids had never even slept outside in their backyards. All her rock star seniors graduated last year and in their place she had a bunch of freshmen that more often than not picked fights with each other, got into stupid little squabbles and generally acted more like grade school kids than high school freshman.

Why couldn't things ever stay the same? She knew it was the wrong question to ask, but she couldn't help herself. Every year more freshmen came in, some tall and lanky with peach fuzz and rosy faces, others short, squeaky voiced and bashful. Every year, she looked at the seniors and wondered how they grew up so fast, and it wasn't just that they looked older; some of them still looked like they were twelve. No, something deeper had changed. Every year, she saw how a group of youth that had almost nothing in common started to grow up together, look out for each other, laugh with each other and cry with each other.

But she knew it wasn't by accident. Kids don't just "accidentally" turn into young men and women. It takes all kinds of testing the boundaries of their adulthood. It takes failed responsibilities. It took parents and coaches, pastors and youth directors to challenge them toward maturity.

She thought of Paul's words to the Colossians: "Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we might present everyone mature in Christ" (Col 1:28). Is this what the Body of Christ looked like? Aching when her youth group kids made the wrong decisions? Being as proud as a parent when they finally got it right? But she knew that they were just on their way to growing up. It wouldn't happen in just one day. Maturity takes a lifetime.

### The Christian Life as the Living Body of Christ

It is difficult to think about the Church without referring to it as "The Body Of Christ," and the associations of this metaphor can (and have) take up many volumes. This is Paul's favorite metaphor for the Church. It is richly and deeply mined throughout his letters. In his letter to the Colossians, Paul uses three vivid examples that are based on the Body of Christ.

First, the goal of the body is maturity, the wisdom that comes from living life. A deepening understanding of the Gospel leads a person to maturity, as Paul makes clear that his goal for the Colossians to "present everyone mature in Christ" (Col 1:28). The knowledge of one's state before God as utterly undeserving, lost and condemned and the growing understanding of "how high and long and wide and deep is the love of Christ" (Eph 3:18), a truth that one understands more deeply the more a person matures.

Second, the goal of the body is to share in all that happens to the body. Paul describes this in his own life as how he says, "Now I rejoice in my sufferings for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions for the sake of His body" (Col 1:24). He would

“bear on my body the marks of Jesus” (Gal 6:17). The unity that Paul finds in the Body of Christ allows him to rejoice and to suffer both on behalf of Christ and on behalf of the greater Church. It is the peace that Christ has won for us in his body that we are commanded to “let rule in your hearts” (Col 3:15).

Third, the body of Christ is clothed with Christ’s righteousness. In the same way that the inner workings of baptism correspond to the taking off and putting on of clothes, so Paul exhorts us to take off our old self and put on good deeds. In the same way that by faith alone are we saved and yet faith never comes alone, so the Body of Christ is clothed with “compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience... and above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony” (Col 3:12–14).

#### The Gospel Connection

By the Sacrament of Holy Baptism, Christ becomes our head and we are his body (Col 1:18). Christ our head reconciles “to himself all things” and makes “peace by the blood of his cross” (Col 1:20). Our salvation has been accomplished when we are in Christ (Col 1:1–2). Even as we look to become, we know that we are becoming what we already are, as Paul says we are growing up into the head which is Christ Jesus (Eph 4:15), even as we share in the afflictions that Christ suffers (Col 1:24) because we have already “died to the elemental spirits of the world” (Col 2:20). The metaphor is a reality by the Gospel, and it is exhortation by extension.

#### Sermon—New Clothes

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Our sermon text for today is from Colossians in the third chapter.

Dear friends in Christ,

Paul begins his letter to the Colossians by pointing out Christ’s significance: he is the ruler



of all, the master of all, through whom, in whom, by whom all things were made. He is the firstborn of creation, the head of both the world and the people of God. Paul has said this before, that Christ is the head. He is the head of the world and the head of his people. But here he goes on to say it like this: if he is the head, then we his people are his body. Let's stop there for a moment. This is a familiar image to us, that we are his body. Christ controls the parts of his body to work together, brings them into salvation, dies and rises so that his body is renewed, and so that we (who are his body) are renewed too.

But then he moves on.

But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all.

Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony, Col 3:8–14

When we are claimed as his body, taken into his own to die and rise with him, he is our head, the same he who is head over all creation, which means that through him, by him and in him we live and breath and do all things. And thus, as his resurrected body, he tells us, “Put on new clothes.”

And this makes sense! The summer of my eighth grade year, I detasseled corn, working in the fields from 6:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Because of the dense corn foliage, we would have to wear long sleeves and pants as we waded through fields that were muddy in the morning and dusty by the afternoon and hot all day long. And by the time the day ended, sweat was rolling down your face, your hands were streaked with mud, your clothes were filthy and there was only one thing in the whole entire world—take a shower. Now, when you come out, you don't put on your old

clothes. No! You find new clothes to put on.

So Paul tells his people. You have been cleansed! Do not put on the stinking, chafing, dirty clothes rather the new, clean, sweet-smelling clothes! With your cleanness, comes new life and new clothes.

What are the old clothes? They are rage, anger, evil, blasphemy, filthy speech, lying. They are the sins of the mouth, angry speech, deception, the sin of the serpent in the Garden, as old as man himself. For so long we as a people have worn the clothes of evil! In our immaturity, we have spoken lies and clothed ourselves with such lies from the time the world had began. Lies like “We ourselves can progress past our sin.” “I can banish my unhappiness, defeat death, take the world and mold it into something better.” We have gotten our hands and our hearts dirty building our Babel to heaven, speaking in our selfish tongue, molding our world into an image of ourselves.

You can see this, can't you? We look at the world outside groaning. Despite our technology, tsunamis destroy towns, despite our efforts, hurricanes sweep across vulnerable countries. Despite our technology, poverty seems to grow, and problems don't end.

And with technology comes a terrible price. We alter the landscape, rape the earth, and destroy the very beauty we seek in search of our metals and our fuels, our safety and our convenience. We have molded this earth into our image, and it has paid a terrible price, because our clothes are dirty and with dirty hands we have crafted a broken world, groaning from the sin we have cursed it with.

The problem is, our dirty wasn't even the right kind of dirty. God did not require hands and hearts and clothes dirty with the stink of technological prowess and desecration. He required a different kind of dirt on our clothes and on our hands. The dirt and stain of sackcloth and ashes—

the filth of mourning and repentance to be placed upon our faces and to make gray our soiled garments.

He looked for people to mourn their sin and see the damage wreaked by our own dirty hands. He wanted us to wail that we are not in control, that Babel was a mistake, that our image is broken, our plans are futile and that we should turn to the one true planner, the one whole image, who is in all and through all and with all. The one who is head not only of his body but also of the whole world. The one who forms the whole world, and even the church into his image, an image unbroken, an image of wholeness, of peace.

Today we dwell on this meditation: Jesus is a man that mourns the world and mourns his fallen brethren. He is a man that dirties his own clothes with the dust of the towns that have driven him out. He dirties his hands by wiping mud on Blind Bartimaeus' face to heal him. He dirties his cloak when the unclean woman touches him and stops bleeding. He dirties his own clothes with his own blood as he chooses to take a cross that was meant for another up to a dark and dirty hill. Jesus Christ who is head of the world, who seeks to form us and the whole world into his image stripped of even that clothing, divided and torn and useless.

Did you know? His death left him naked. It stripped him of even his filthy garments, and hung him on a cross. When it was over, they wrapped him in linen cloths, and laid him in a tomb.

But his resurrection worked something new – it clothed him in clothes like lightning, attended by angels with clothes as bright as snow. It took the grey ashes of his mourning and turned it into the light of the coming dawn. It clothed him in newness, in his full image, in the way that the world is to be remade, in him, through him and by him.

Did you know? This new making started in him, who is the head, and it passes through you who are his body.

So let us hear the words of Paul again! “Put on new clothes!” Paul says. For just as Christ was clothed anew on Easter, so we too are clothed anew, our old clothes stripped off in his death and our new clothes put on in his rising. “Put on new clothes!” Paul says. For we are no longer ruled by old desires and ancient serpent curses! “Put on new clothes!” Paul says, for Babel’s tower to the heaven is no longer our tower. “Put on new clothes!” Paul says, for in the end the world is not remade in our image but in his!

And the new clothes he gives us are these: a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience. Paul calls these the innermost garments, the first layer of clothing over the skin. They are the Christian’s secret inner workings, the way that we look at the world. Though the world that we see is clothed in destruction, and greed and anger and lies, we look at it clothed with love and compassion and wisdom and patience.

Now, that does not mean that we cover over all the sin and ignore it. It means that though man’s broken image is all around us, we still see God’s goodness despite—and within—pain. Though the world may think in the ways of false witness, of pain and of disaster, Christ puts on us, in our innermost being—on our very center—merciful compassion.

And over all these things, he puts on us love, for love binds them all together. Oh, we’ve heard this before—1 Corinthians 13, among others. But this is particularly special. When our innermost garments are compassion and patience, then that which joins them all together, our belt, is love, binding all together, keeping them close, drawing them near to us. Over all, through all and in all is love.

For love follows its nature, and its nature is God. Remember 1 Jn 4? Our God is a God of love. Our God is the very definition and understanding of love; our God is the essence of love; our God is love. By love, through love, and in love, all things are seen aright. Not that evil is

ignored but that goodness works rightly to make it right. The broken world, broken in our image and clothed with our own clothing of hate and anger and deception, was once bound together with love. Our world, with all its lies, with all its danger, with all its dirt, will be bound once again someday together in love.

God's people, those who are connected to the head, which is Christ, in his body, which is us, are clothed by the very things of Christ himself – his patience, humility and compassion bound in love so that just as Christ was the first fruits of the dead, that we may follow.

So too we are the first fruits of this compassion and patience and humility that the world may follow. For we are called not only to wear these clothes but to clothe others in them and to clothe the world in them. For Christ first went preaching his words as the foretaste of his death and resurrection. We follow him preaching of his coming again, doing as he did, praying as he prayed, restoring as he would restore, that the world might not follow our image but his. That it might not be clothed in the dirt of destruction but the ashes of mourning, that the world may also be clothed in the last days, as Christ comes again with the clothes like lightning, the clothes as white as snow, the clothes bound by love and set upon a risen, clean, and pure people, dedicated to God, in his image (not the other way around) and finally and wonderfully and beautifully new.

This is our hope, a hope not only for ourselves but for the other, and not only for the other, but also for our world, and not only for our world but also for the universe, that when Christ comes back he will show himself as the head of the body that is the church and the head of the world that is the universe and that he will make whole what was broken. He will finally take off the sackcloth clothes of mourning and clothe the whole world in white-like-lightning clothes, that he will bring the reality of the death and resurrection of God to reality in compassion of his people, in the humility of his people, in the patience of his people, in the image of a world

unbroken, in the love that binds God to man, God to world, and man to world.

Amen and Amen.

### THE CHRISTIAN LIFE AS ΠΕΡΙΠΑΤΕΩ

And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, Col 1:9–10

Aaron threw down his pack. By his journal entries, it had been two and a half months since he started this hike, and he was almost done. He'd started down at Springer Mountain and hiked his way up the Appalachian Trail, twenty miles a day, rain or shine. He'd gotten lost, been chased by bears, gone hungry, experienced kindness from strangers, and learned how little he could really control.

In fact earlier that week, his compass had broken at an especially bad time. The glass top cracked when he set his pack down to get a drink of water, and in the next five miles, he only had the barest markings of a trail to go on in the overgrowth. He had to search hard to keep at least close to the trail, and a number of times he looked up at the sun, realized that he'd been wandering, and reoriented himself to keep on the right track. The easiest times were when the trees fell away and the trail wound through open fields. At those times, he could keep his eyes on the horizon and walk straight. The hardest parts were when the forest was thick and the way wound around. There it was easy to get lost.

But the real reason he went on this journey was because he just didn't know what to do with his life. He's worked a few years in the corporate world before he couldn't take it anymore. He didn't know his purpose. God had a plan for him, right? He just hoped he hadn't missed "the one" he should've married or messed up and lost his chance to fulfill "his vocation." Aaron just

felt lost. He just wanted to arrive: to get to where God wanted him to be. But he never felt like he was going to get there.

Then he looked in his journal entry from earlier that day, on Col 1:9–10, “And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord.” His Christian life really was like a journey, a walk from baptism to God’s end. The Spirit was guiding him and correcting him. He was constantly getting lost, but the Spirit would constantly reorient him to his destination. It didn’t matter so much where he went – his Guide would take care of that. It mattered more how he walked. How he treated his companions. How he treated the strangers he met. How he guided the lost and helped needy along the way.

### The Christian Life as Walking toward a Goal

The Christian life is like a journey. In his letter to the Colossians, Paul reminds his hearers that they once were walking apart from God, but now their God commands them to walk, to live their Christian life, in a way that is worthy of Him.

From the command for Abraham to leave Haran and journey to Canaan, from the journey of the Israelites across the Red Sea to the Promised Land, from the sending of countless prophets, from the journeys of Jesus and the sending of the Apostles, the Bible and the cultures of the world have seen a rich metaphorical underpinning in the language of the journey. This is as much a metaphor of the Old Testament authors as it is of the New Testament letters. It is hardly possible to describe life without “journey” language or think through the implications of life without using its underlying logical inferences.

First, the Christian journey begins at baptism. “Once you were in darkness; but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of the light” (Eph 5:8). It is one of two points that you

look toward for orientation, so that your walk through the middle of your faith journey would be in line with its origin.

Second, the Christian journey ends in everlasting life. Just as the origin point of baptism influences your walk through life, so the destination does as well. Paul reminds his readers of their baptism and encourages them to know that the hour grows short and that the end of their journey will draw near.

Third, orientation matters. Paul bids his listeners to walk “*in a manner worthy of the Lord*” (Col 1:10). Not only does the origin and destination matter; the manner is of paramount importance to God. Whatever highway or byway you may have wandered onto, what matters more than progress made in a certain direction is that you are walking as the Lord guides.

### The Gospel Connection

Baptism is our origin, and everlasting life is our destination. When Paul describes the Christian life as a walk “worthy of the Lord” (Col 1:10), he does so on the basis that you are delivered “from the domain of darkness and transferred . . . into the kingdom of his beloved Son” (Col 1:13). We look back to remember our origin: the salvation won on the cross and the waters of our Baptism that incorporate us into that salvation. We look forward to our destination: the end of all things when Christ will come back in all his glory. We walk in this present age with those two shining beacons of Gospel lighting our way, so that the way we walk might demonstrate the saving work of our God to outsiders (Col 4:5).

### Sermon—A Long Obedience in the Same Direction

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Dear Friends in Christ,

In his letter to the Colossians, Paul describes the Christian life as a journey. Three lessons



that we would learn from St. Paul about life as a Christian, walking the long road of obedience in the same direction as our Lord. First, that our origin is in our baptism. Second, that our destination is eternal life. Third, that our manner of walking, our orientation, matters.

Lesson number one. Our origin is in our baptism. St. Paul writes in Colossians 2, keep on walking as you have received Christ. Remember your origin point, because it will help you to walk well, not to be deceived by all that which comes up in this world. Remember where you came from.

I've been told that if you ever receive an organ transplant, they call the day of your surgery "Day Zero." In fact, for bone marrow transplants, those who have blood cancers, you find your donor. You harvest the marrow. And the day that they inject the donor's marrow in, they tell you that in the course of time, this process will give you all new blood. You will have a new identity; you will be reborn.

I tell you that to tell you this: in Philippians 3, Paul says he could talk about his credentials, his roots, his origin. "Circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews... But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ." What does that mean, that he counts his pedigree as loss?

It becomes worthless in the face of something greater. Paul points toward this: that Christ has made me his own. I have received Christ Jesus as Lord.

It is in Holy Baptism that Christ has claimed you as his own. He has bought and paid for you. All the benefits of Jesus's sacrifice are yours through the water combined with His Word. In Holy Baptism, he turns your world upside down and connects you by his promise to the most important even in the history of the world, the day when Jesus died and when he rose again, and so the beginning of your new life.

Lesson number two. Our destination is eternal life. St. Paul writes in chapters three and four, You used to walk in a foolishness way. Walk now in wisdom, not only because your journey begins at baptism, but also because the end of the journey draws near. Every moment is precious as we draw near to the Day when God makes everything new.

And so, I'll ask you: how does a person mow in a straight line?

In my career as a pastor I've made it a point to ask good questions, and I can tell you, this one isn't yet at the top of the list. But, nonetheless we ask it now: How does a person mow in a straight line?

I can tell you this, that when I was twelve, I had basically two schools of thought. Option number one would say that I make my path straight by staring at the ground in front of me. I can make the corrections I need to. I can react to the moment. I can hop around things I didn't want to step in. I can see the wheel track from my last pass and follow that, but I can tell you that it didn't work out well. I was all over the place. The lawn didn't look good.

Option number two would say that the best way to mow straight is to be less concerned with what's happening in the moment and more concerned to pick a spot in the distance and keep your eyes on the destination. I might have to walk over hills. I might have to step in something unpleasant, but through all the little stuff that could distract, I kept my rows straight.

In fact, the second school of thought was so effective that not only would the rows be straight, but also I didn't even have to think about keeping the mower going straight. As I kept my eyes on my destination, it was a long walk in the right direction.

St. Paul says, walk with wisdom, and remember that the Day is coming closer. Or, as the Psalmist would have it, "Teach us to number our days, so that we may get a heart of wisdom" (Ps 90:12), and here we still transformative Christian truth at work.

Teach us to number our days in light of the eternal life that our God has given in Jesus Christ. Teach us to get a wisdom knowing that these few days are precious, and that still we may depart in peace. Let us walk knowing that to live is Christ and to die is gain.

Lesson number three. Our orientation matters. I was in 8<sup>th</sup> grade, I remember, when we had outdoor education. We went out to a camp. We did bird watching. We dissected owl pellets. And we went orienteering. I got my compass. I measured my stride, and took the little sheet with directions out into the wood.

Do you know that little sheet? Turn to 240 degrees. Walk 200 yards, turn 52 degrees west, walk one hundred paces. And so on and so forth.

But I tell you that to tell you this: my orientation mattered. I had to know my stride. I had to know my compass. And in order to get where I needed to go, I needed to orient myself to that which would give meaning to the long obedience we have in this same direction.

St. Paul writes, walk in a manner worthy of the Lord. Orient yourself toward his coordinates. Remember where you've been, what you have heard from us, and walk in wisdom and understanding. Keep on walking, looking back to remember how much your God loves you, how he grabbed ahold of you in baptism. Keep on walking, looking forward to that day when God will make all things right. Keep on walking, remembering, correcting.

He says (and I paraphrase), "You were being tempted to walk in a way that doesn't coincide with having received Christ Jesus as Lord. You used to walk in darkness, but now your direction has changed. You've traded immorality and impurity for compassionate hearts and kindness. Passion and evil desires for humility and meekness. Anger and obscene talk for forgiveness and patience."

For us too, there are days when it seems worth it and days when it does not. But here, we

are “to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; being strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy” (Col 1:10–11). To see the fruit of a life of virtue, a life full of the habits of kindness and compassion, teaching and being taught, singing and worshipping, to orient yourself toward all that is truly important and to let all else be what it may.

It is a long obedience in the same direction...

Everyone is in a hurry. The persons whom I lead in worship, among whom I counsel, visit, pray, preach, and teach, want shortcuts. They want me to help them fill out the form that will get them instant credit in eternity. They are impatient for results. They have adopted the lifestyle of a tourist and only want the high points. But a pastor is not a tour guide... Friedrich Nietzsche, who saw this area of spiritual truth at least with great clarity, wrote, ‘The essential thing in heaven and on earth is... that there should be long obedience in the same direction; there thereby results, and has always resulted in the long run, something which has made life worth living.’<sup>3</sup>

Here’s why: it’s only when you try to be kind that you find out how hard it is to be kind.

It’s only when you start to have compassion for those who are truly different from you that you realize how difficult true compassion is. It is only when you orient yourself toward forgive that you find out how hard it is to follow the path of forgiveness. It is only when you walk in a manner pleasing to God, when you orient yourself to the truths of our God for the hundredth, for the thousandth, for the millionth time that we start to understand how little we really understand, and how he loves us so.

One songwriter put it like this: “He is jealous for me / His love’s like a hurricane, I am a tree bending beneath the weight of his wind and mercy / And all of a sudden, I am unaware of these afflictions eclipsed by glory / And I realize just how beautiful You are and how great your

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<sup>3</sup> Eugene Peterson, *A Long Obedience in the Same Direction: Discipleship in an Instant Society*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000), 17.

affections are for me / Oh how he loves us so.”<sup>4</sup> C.S. Lewis said it like this: “It would seem that Our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us.”<sup>5</sup> Which would you orient yourself toward? Drink and sex and ambition? Or infinite joy?

Keep on walking. Let the Son guide you. Look back and remember your baptism as the most important day of your life. Look forward and take courage from the eternal life that is already yours.

Amen and Amen.

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<sup>4</sup> David Crowder Band, “How He Loves,” by John Mark McMillan, recorded 2009, track 10 on *Church Music*, Sixstepsrecords, MP3.

<sup>5</sup> Lewis, “The Weight of Glory,” in *The Weight of Glory*, 26.

## CHAPTER SIX

### CONCLUSION

The logic of metaphor is the logic of our lives. Metaphor impinges on everything, allowing us—poets and non-poets alike—to experience and think about the world in fluid, unusual ways. Metaphor is the bridge we fling between the utterly strange and the utterly familiar, between dice and drowned men’s bones, between I and an other.<sup>1</sup>

The mind categorizes by way of metaphor. A metaphor’s meaning is found in its underlying narrative. A metaphor’s persuasiveness comes from the strength of that underlying narrative. In this thesis, I have attempted to demonstrate that the underlying logic of that makes meaning out of Paul’s metaphors for the Christian life allows him to make the logical inferences that hold together his exhortation. Further than that, each metaphor highlights aspects of the Christian life while hiding other aspects, and Paul uses these distinct metaphors as he makes specific statements about the Christian life.

I applied these principles to three major metaphors in Paul’s letter to the Colossians: CHRISTIAN LIFE IS ἈΓΩΝ (Col 1:28–29, 2:1, 3:15, 4:12), CHRISTIAN CHURCH IS ΣΩΜΑ (Col 1:1–2, 18, 22, 24; 2:11, 17, 23; 2:9, 11, 17, 19; 3:15), and CHRISTIAN LIFE IS ΠΕΡΙΠΑΤΕΩ (Col 1:10; 2:6; 3:7; 4:5). The result of that analysis included the development of three distinct narrative models, each of which highlighted and hid aspects of the Christian life and connected to the Gospel in different ways. In CHRISTIAN LIFE IS ἈΓΩΝ, Paul and the people are individuals that fill the actantial position of Subject and the Gospel is delivered as Helper. In CHRISTIAN CHURCH IS ΣΩΜΑ, the metaphor acts primarily as one of the Saving Act, and exhortation for Christian living

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<sup>1</sup> James Geary, *I Is an Other: The Secret Life of Metaphor and How It Shapes the Way We See the World* (New York: HarperCollins, 2011), 224–25.

is by extension rather than its first purpose. In *CHRISTIAN LIFE IS ΠΕΡΙΠΑΤΕΩ*, the orientation, origin, and destination connect the metaphor to the Saving Act and the Parousia.

Finally, I have attempted to express the value of not only teaching Paul's images but also reasoning the way he reasons by way of story, exposition, and sermon. This is in line with the original intent of Justin Rossow, to whose work I am much indebted. The exegetical models from distinct metaphors allow for deeper, richer preaching and teaching with vivid and precise language.

Although the goal of my thesis is to analyze and value Paul's use of metaphors for their distinct logical underpinnings rather than create a general model of Christian living, I do see value in general models, and I have observed a few general trends worth writing about.

Some metaphors of Christian living mirror the language of the Gospel, simply with different actors in actantial position. The preacher can proclaim in Col 1:12–14 the journey of salvation while still exhorting the hearer to “walk in wisdom” in Col 4:5.

Other metaphors of Christian living exhort by extension from a Gospel metaphor. The Body of Christ metaphor in Colossians is not centered on the exhortation to put on new clothes but Paul does make the logical inference based on the underlying narrative.

I am grateful that this thesis has afforded me opportunities for growth. Areas for further study include other metaphorical utterances even within Colossians. Undoubtedly the reader noticed the many other metaphors that come into view even in my analysis of only these three. What does it mean to be rooted in Christ? What does it mean to be built up in Christ, to be established, to bear fruit, to be filled, and why do their particular subnarratives lend weight to the exhortation that they support? My thesis asks and answers only a portion of the questions that could be explored within a single epistle written by only one of many biblical authors. The

distinct models that arise from each author's use of both unique and common metaphors can add nuance to overall models of the Christian life.



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