

THE “CHURCH” IN THE OLD TESTAMENT: SYSTEMATIC, LINGUISTIC, AND METAPHORIC PERSPECTIVES

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The present study looks at the way Old Testament data is used and integrated in recent ecclesiological studies. After a brief look at linguistic connections (looking at the route of MT via the LXX to the NT), it focuses on the important contribution that the study of metaphors can make in this context. As a starting point it highlights the two metaphors of “family” and “body” as important links between the Old Testament and the New Testament, providing a useful conceptual basis for an ecclesiology that is rooted in both Testaments.

Key Words: ecclesiology, Old Testament, family, metaphors, systematic theology, church

1. Introduction

The concept of the *church* is primarily associated with Jesus and early Christianity, which marked an obvious change in the definition of the people of God from a principally ethnic angle towards a more inclusive perspective crossing ethnic boundaries. While there are numerous studies dealing with the relationship between Israel and the church exist, these focus primarily upon the period following the death and resurrection of Christ,¹ and very

¹ This is indeed a contentious issue, both in general theological thought as well as in recent Seventh-day Adventist discussions. Obviously, the dispensationalist interpretation of biblical prophecy with its peculiar hermeneutical approach and its strong interest in modern Israel has been a driving force for studies looking at Israel and the church. See here, e. g., a more progressive and updated perspective of dispensationalism Craig A. Blaising and Darrell L. Bock, eds., *Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church: The Search for Definition* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992). Compare also Steve Motyer, *Israel in the Plan of God. Light on Today's Debate* (Leicester: InterVarsity, 1989); Darrell L. Bock, “Current Messianic Activity and OT Davidic Promise: Dispensationalism, Hermeneutics, and NT Fulfillment,” *TJ* 15 (1994): 55–87, or Russell D. Moore, “Till Every Foe is Vanquished: Emerging Sociopolitical Implications of Progressive Dispensational Eschatology,” in *Looking into the Future. Evangelical Studies in Eschatology* (ed. David W. Baker; Evangelical Theological Society Studies; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001),

little has been written about the concept of the church in the Old Testament. In this study, I will first review how biblical data from the Old Testament features in recent ecclesiological studies, including systematic theologies and monographs.² In the next section the linguistic evidence typically referred to in most ecclesiological studies will be reviewed, particularly the use and function of ἐκκλησία "church," συναγωγή "synagogue," in the New Testament and their use in the Greek translation of the Old Testament, generally known as the Septuagint. The third section of this study will broaden the perspective from a solely linguistic or terminological view towards a broader conceptual outlook, in an attempt to integrate the fruits of recent research on metaphor, focusing upon the metaphors of family and body as applied to God's people in the Old and New Testaments. Finally, I wish to point out the connections between the Old and the New Testament's conceptual description of the people of God which are highly relevant for establishing a biblical ecclesiology.

2. The Role of the Old Testament in Current Ecclesiological Studies

The study of ecclesiology is an integral part of systematic theology, often presented in connection with other major theological topics, such as the nature of Scripture (including Revelation and Inspiration), God, Man, Sin, Christ, Salvation and Last things.³ Interestingly, Norman Gulley's recent

342–61, which provide a concise introduction or an updated perspective of the theological method of dispensationalism. From an Adventist perspective the issue has generated some theological discussion over the past decades. See, e.g., Hans K. LaRondelle, *The Israel of God in Prophecy. Principles of Prophetic Interpretation* (Andrews University Monographs, Studies in Religion 8; Berrien Springs: Andrews University Press, 1983); Norman R. Gulley, "Progressive Dispensationalism: A Review of a Recent Publication," *AUSS* 32 (1994): 41–46; Norman R. Gulley, "Una evaluación de la hermenéutica dispensacional acerca de Israel," in *Entender la Palabra. Hermenéutica Adventista para el Nuevo Siglo* (ed. Merling Alomía et al.; Cochabamba: Bolivian Adventist University Press, 2000), 237–68; Reinaldo Siqueira, "The 'Mystery' of Israel and the Church," *Shabbat Shalom* 48 (Autumn 2001): 17–18; Jacques Doukhan, *Israel and the Church: Two Voices for the Same God* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2002); or Gerhard Pfandl, "Israel and the Church," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 13.2 (2002): 15–29.

² Due to the space limitations of this study, I am not aiming at providing a complete literature review of the past decades. I have purposefully limited myself to interacting primarily with more recent scholarship.

³ For a quick review of the different disciplines in theological studies and the important topics of systematic theology (as well as its interaction with other disciplines of

massive *Prolegomena* to a Systematic Theology, written from a Seventh-day Adventist perspective, presents the standard categories of theological studies from the perspective of the cosmic controversy between good and evil and, thus, introduces an important new element in systematic theology which generally is not emphasized in the systematic presentation of biblical doctrine.⁴

How does the Old Testament fare in these ecclesiological sections? In Grudem's *Systematic Theology* it appears only fleetingly in a section dealing with the church and Israel, where Grudem defends his non-dispensationalist position. However, most of the biblical discussion centers on the crucial section of Rom 7–9, as well as the Epistle to the Ephesians.⁵ He emphasizes the distinct nature of the Israel of the Old Testament and the New Testament church, which includes in one body both Jewish and Gentile believers. In Grudem's ecclesiological discussion one gets the impression that the church began only in the New Testament and that the Old Testament and its emphasis upon the people of God did not have any real theological significance.

In the same year that Grudem's *Systematic Theology* appeared, Stanley Grenz published his *Theology for the Community of God*, which also includes a substantial section focusing upon ecclesiology.⁶ As with most systematic treatments of the church, Grenz begins his ecclesiological presentation with

theological studies) see Ekkehardt Müller, "Theological Thinking in the Adventist Church," *DavarLogos* 1 (2002): 125–47, esp. 127–31. Wayne Grudem (*Systematic Theology. An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* [Leicester: InterVarsity; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994], 21) defines systematic theology as "any study that answers the question, 'what does the whole Bible teach us today' about any given topic." While being aware of historical theology, philosophical theology, and apologetics, Grudem excludes these elements from his definition of systematic theology, although they are sometimes included in this discipline.

- ⁴ Norman R. Gulley, *Systematic Theology. Prolegomena* (Berrien Springs: Andrews University Press, 2003), xxiii.
- ⁵ Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 859–63. The ecclesiological section of Grudem's work is quite substantial and includes some 100 pages (853–953), although if one would include the ordinances of the church (as Grudem does) the section would be even larger (853–1088).
- ⁶ Stanley J. Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 601–742. As the title suggests, Grenz seems to make the community, and not necessarily Scripture, the integrative thematic perspective of his systematic theology. This explains the lack of a significant section dealing with the doctrine of Scripture, including inspiration and revelation. See also the critical observations in Gulley, *Systematic Theology. Prolegomena*, xxvi, 99–110.

an analysis of the Greek term ἐκκλησία "church" and its use in the Septuagint and the New Testament.⁷ This is followed by brief introductions to major New Testament metaphors of the church, i.e., as nation, body, and temple. The next major section deals with the biblical concept of the kingdom, including a succinct discussion of this idea in the Old Testament.⁸ Unfortunately, this is the total sum of Grenz' interaction with the Old Testament.⁹

In 1995, James Garrett Jr. published the second volume of his *Systematic Theology: Biblical, Historical, and Evangelical* which also includes a substantial section focusing upon the church.¹⁰ As already seen in the previous works, Garrett also begins with a brief review of the lexical data concerning ἐκκλησία "church." He dedicates less than two pages to this section and never really turns to the Old Testament.

Millard Erickson has been one of the major influences in evangelical thought over the past 35 years,¹¹ beginning with the publication of his doctoral dissertation in 1968¹² as well as his three-volume *Readings in Christian Theology*¹³ and his later *Christian Theology*.¹⁴ In the second edition of *Introducing Christian Doctrine*, Erickson dedicates 30 pages to the study of the church following a pattern already seen in his earlier studies: a brief section dealing with terminology, including ἐκκλησία "church," followed by an introduction to three biblical images of church, viz. people, the body of Christ, and the temple of the Holy Spirit.¹⁵ While one should not forget that this is an

⁷ Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, 605–6. He mentions two Old Testament references.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 615–16.

⁹ Later sections of his ecclesiology deal with the ministries of the church, acts of commitment and the church (e.g., ordinances, baptism, Lord's Supper), as well as the organization of the church (including the issue of ordination).

¹⁰ James Leo Garrett, Jr., *Systematic Theology. Biblical, Historical, and Evangelical. Volume 2* (Grand Rapids: Eedmans, 1995), 455–644.

¹¹ A good introduction to Millard's life and ministry and the shapers and context of his theology can be found in David S. Dockery, "Millard J. Erickson: Theologian for the Church," in *New Dimensions in Evangelical Thought. Essays in Honor of Millard J. Erickson* (ed. David S. Dockery; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1998), 17–31.

¹² Millard J. Erickson, *The New Evangelical Theology* (Westwood: Revell, 1968).

¹³ Millard J. Erickson, *Readings in Christian Theology* (3 vols.; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1973–1979).

¹⁴ Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (3 vols.; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1983–1985).

¹⁵ Millard J. Erickson, *Introducing Christian Doctrine* (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 339–68, esp. 340–45.

introductory textbook to systematic theology for undergraduate students, the lack of references to the Old Testament is remarkable. Again, ἐκκλησία is something that only appears in NT times. A similar position can also be found in many other works dealing with the issue.¹⁶

In 1997 William Barr edited an interesting volume, entitled *Constructive Christian Theology in the Worldwide Church*, which contained forty (mostly shorter) chapters written by different contributors reviewing the state of the art of Christian Theology within the context of the globalization of hermeneutics and theology.¹⁷ Seven chapters focus upon the church, although none present a systematic biblical perspective.¹⁸ This seems to reflect the general tendency toward replacing systematic biblical reflection with culturally relevant discussions.¹⁹

Boyd Hunt included a review article on current trends in evangelical thinking about ecclesiology in the *Festschrift* dedicated to Millard Erickson in 1998.²⁰ Beginning with the biblical resources or foundations relevant to a Bible-based ecclesiology he, surprisingly, emphasizes the importance of the Old Testament for a biblical ecclesiology.

The inestimable importance of the Old Testament is that the New Testament idea of the church is deeply rooted in the Hebrew Scriptures. According to the Old Testament, Israel is God's people, chosen not only to privilege but also to mission. The prophets looked forward to a coming great day of the Lord and a new covenant, creating the new people of God in the last days (Jer 31:31–34). Yet this Old Testament teaching, significant as it is, remained incomplete. The New Testament idea of the

¹⁶ See, e.g., Rufino Velasco, *La Iglesia de Jesús. Proceso histórico de la conciencia eclesial* (Estella: Verbo Divino, 1992), 15–20, 39–40, where this principle is plainly stated. The church is post-Jesus.

¹⁷ William R. Barr, ed., *Constructive Christian Theology in the Worldwide Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997).

¹⁸ Most chapters focus upon social, contextual, and cultural issues in connection to ecclesiology, e.g., "The Role of the Church in a Pluralist Society," "The Understanding of the Church Emerging in the Bilateral Dialogues—Coherence or Divergence?," or "The Church's Witness in Evangelism and Social Praxis," to mention a few.

¹⁹ See my critical discussion of the phenomenon of cultural criticism in biblical studies and the larger field of biblical hermeneutics in Gerald A. Klingbeil, "Cultural Criticism and Biblical Hermeneutics: Definition, Origins, Benefits, and Challenges," *BBR* 15 (2005): 261–77.

²⁰ Boyd Hunt, "New Dimensions in Church," in *New Dimensions in Evangelical Thought. Essays in Honor of Millard J. Erickson* (ed. David S. Dockery; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1998), 338–53.

people of God far transcends the ethnic (Jewish), political (nation kingdom) and cultic (temple sacrifices, priestly rituals, holy days) limitations associated with the Old Testament idea of God's people.²¹

It appears that the Old Testament is after all not entirely useless for establishing a viable ecclesiology. Encouraging, as this statement may appear, Hunt does not make mention of the Old Testament when he discusses the multiple images of the church, its nature and mission, the form of the church, and its need for continuing renewal. Hence, one perceives a gap between his introductory premise and the later practical application of this theoretical framework.

In 2001 Joseph Hellerman published *The Ancient Church as Family*, which explores the literature of the first three centuries of the church in terms of group identity and formation as surrogate kinship.²² After a brief introduction to the social environment in which Christianity evolved, Hellerman describes different conceptual foundations of Mediterranean family systems. The basic thesis of the study suggests that early Christianity understood the church as a surrogate patrilineal kin group and makes fascinating reading. An important element in the toolbox of Hellerman is social science research, including anthropology and sociology. However, it is clear that the author is more interested in documenting the development of this concept during the first three centuries of the Christian church than in establishing its origins in the Old Testament.²³

Unfortunately, I did not have direct access to the last book of this literature review. In 2001 Wes Howard-Brook published *The Church before Christianity* which looks at the earliest followers of Jesus and their understanding and application of the risen Christ as the basis for their shared community.²⁴ The historical focus of the volume on the first century CE realities of the early church is helpful (as compared to the more general systematic treatments discussed so far), but it does not go much beyond the time of Christ.

The year 2002 marks the publication of two relevant volumes dealing with ecclesiology. Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, Associate Professor of Systematic

²¹ Ibid., 339.

²² Joseph H. Hellerman, *The Ancient Church as Family* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001).

²³ Hellerman devotes only four pages to a discussion of the concept of the "people of God" in the Old Testament (ibid., 59–62). He does, however, make the important point that sibling terminology is not only associated with direct blood relatives (or ancestors), but goes beyond the direct family relation and links different (often antagonistic) family, clan, and tribal groups (ibid., 61).

²⁴ Wes Howard-Brook, *The Church before Christianity* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2001).

Theology at Fuller Theological Seminary, presented a concise introduction to ecclesiology from an ecumenical, historical and global perspective.²⁵ Unfortunately, Kärkkäinen does not begin with the biblical data, but with different confessional ecclesiologies, followed by a discussion of contemporary ecclesiological principles, and finally rounds off the work with a look at the global situation of the church, predominantly focusing upon non-Western contexts. The problem with Kärkkäinen's work is that it is basically descriptive, but lacks critical interaction with different ecclesiological stances as well as the elaboration of a biblically-based ecclesiology.²⁶

In the same year, the sixth volume of a comprehensive seven-volume systematic theology dealing exclusively with the church was published by Donald Bloesch.²⁷ The volume contains some 350 pages (including indexes) and, after defining five current challenges in ecclesiology (authority and infallibility, mission, worship, marks and signs, and unity), the author tries to systematically develop these issues. For the most part, the work focuses upon interaction with earlier systematic theological scholarship, often lacking solid biblical argumentation. This is by no means accidental as Bloesch himself admits.

Theology is not autobiography: its object is not the faith journey of the Christian wayfarer. Nor is theology the systematizing of the teaching of the Bible. The dogmatic task is not simply to ascertain what the prophets and apostles said but to determine what we must say now on the basis of their testimony. In fulfilling this task we not only engage in the study of Scripture but also try to fathom what the Spirit is saying in the Scripture and to the church in every age.²⁸

Perhaps due to this particular theological concept, I could not find any relevant section(s) dealing with the church in the Old Testament.²⁹

²⁵ Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *An Introduction to Ecclesiology: Ecumenical, Historical and Global Perspectives* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2002).

²⁶ This has been observed in Daniel O. Plenc, review of Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *An Introduction to Ecclesiology: Ecumenical, Historical and Global Perspectives*, *DavarLogos* 3 (2004): 87.

²⁷ Donald G. Bloesch, *The Church. Sacraments, Worship, Ministry, Mission* (Christian Foundations 6; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2002).

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 23. While not necessarily relevant to the current issue, it seems as if Bloesch's concept of Scripture is influenced by Barth's encounter theology and his own basic concept of inspiration and revelation.

²⁹ Bloesch utilizes the Old Testament now and then in an illustrative or contrastive manner. See, e.g., in his discussion of women in ministry where he provides many Old Testament references (*ibid.*, 219–20).

These trends are to a large extent mirrored within the denominational context of the Seventh-day Adventist church, although signs of change that suggest a more serious interaction with the Old Testament in Adventist ecclesiological studies are visible.³⁰ The publication of the *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology* in 2000 marked an important event in Adventist thinking about ecclesiology. The article dealing with the church was authored by Raoul Dederen from Andrews University³¹ and includes a fair amount of references to the Old Testament, particularly when discussing the role of the church as "faithful Israel," the covenant relationship between YHWH and his people and the church as spiritual Israel.³² The article itself includes nine major sections, including the church in God's plan, the nature and scope of the church, biblical images of the church, the mission of the church, the government of the church, the ordinances of the church, the authority of the church, the characteristics of the church, and a sobering look into the future of the church. After these theological observations, Dederen also provides a helpful review of the church since its NT beginnings, as well as a selection of Ellen White's comments on the church. True to the purpose of the volume Dederen follows a systematic theology approach to ecclesiology that presents the basic concepts together with crucial biblical references, without necessarily going into detailed exegetical discussions.

While there have been other relevant ecclesiological studies from a Seventh-day Adventist perspective, the present interest in the use of the Old Testament in the formulation of such an ecclesiology causes me to limit my comments to a number of studies that appeared in 2002 in a volume entitled *Pensar la iglesia hoy: hacia una eclesiología adventista*, which contains 35 selected papers read during the Fourth South American Biblical-Theological Symposium, held from August 30 to September 2, 2001, at River Plate Ad-

³⁰ Recently, I completed a bibliographical review of ten years of biblical and theological reflection about the church within the denominational context of the Seventh-day Adventist church. See Gerald A. Klingbeil, "Ecclesiology in Seventh-day Adventist Theological Research 1995–2004: A Brief Introduction and Bibliographical Guide," *AUSS* 43 (2005): 11–29. In the following I will make reference to the most relevant publications.

³¹ Raoul Dederen, "The Church," in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology* (ed. Raoul Dederen; Commentary Reference Series 12; Hagerstown: Review & Herald, 2000), 538–81.

³² *Ibid.*, 543–48.

ventist University in Argentina.³³ The volume is divided into five different sections, dealing with (1) exegetical and biblical issues of the church, (2) larger theological questions, (3) historical reflections, (4) topics related to the church in the world, and (5) practical applications of a re-thought Seventh-day Adventist ecclesiology. In the first section several studies are particularly relevant to the present discussion. All in all six chapters (totaling about 100 pages) look at ecclesiology or ecclesiological issues from the perspective of the Old Testament, which in itself is indeed innovative. Efraín Velásquez looks at the social entity "tribe" (as studied by social scientists) as a possible paradigm for a Seventh-day Adventist ecclesiology that interacts seriously with the Old Testament.³⁴ The dichotomy between individualism and collectivism as portrayed in relevant OT texts is studied by Gerald Klingbeil,³⁵ while Martin Klingbeil looks at the manifold divine metaphors in the Psalms and wonders which metaphor of God would speak to the church today.³⁶ Other studies involve careful attention to particular biblical contexts, as for example, the unity of the church according to Ps 133,³⁷ the remnant motif in the wisdom literature of the Old Testament,³⁸ or ecclesiological principles in the book of Daniel.³⁹

To sum up this part of the present study, it has become clear that the Old Testament does not play an important role in recent ecclesiological studies, particularly those that are more systematic in nature. Most ecclesio-

³³ Gerald A. Klingbeil, Martin G. Klingbeil, and Miguel Ángel Núñez, eds., *Pensar la iglesia hoy: hacia una eclesiología adventista. Estudios teológicos presentados durante el IV Simposio Bíblico-Teológico Sudamericano en honor a Raoul Dederen* (Libertador San Martín, Argentina: River Plate Adventist University Press, 2002).

³⁴ Efraín Velásquez, "La tribu: hacia una eclesiología adventista basada en las Escrituras Hebreas," in *Pensar la iglesia hoy: hacia una eclesiología adventista. Estudios teológicos presentados durante el IV Simposio Bíblico-Teológico Sudamericano en honor a Raoul Dederen* (ed. Gerald A. Klingbeil, Martin G. Klingbeil, and Miguel Ángel Núñez; Libertador San Martín, Argentina: River Plate Adventist University Press, 2002), 25-40.

³⁵ Gerald A. Klingbeil, "Entre individualismo y colectivismo: hacia una perspectiva bíblica de la naturaleza de la iglesia," in *Pensar la iglesia hoy*, 3-22.

³⁶ Martin G. Klingbeil, "'De lo profundo, Jehová, a ti clamo'. Conocer al Dios de Israel a través del himnario veterotestamentario," in *Pensar la iglesia hoy*, 41-56.

³⁷ Richard W. Medina, "La unidad de la iglesia según el Salmo 133," in *Pensar la iglesia hoy*, 57-69.

³⁸ Héctor Urrutia, "El mensaje del remanente final en los libros sapienciales," in *Pensar la iglesia hoy*, 71-92.

³⁹ Carlos Elías Mora, "Principios eclesiológicos hallados en el libro de Daniel," in *Pensar la iglesia hoy*, 93-103.

logical discussions engage energetically with NT texts, but fail to include OT realities, concepts, or references. Aside from the more contentious issue of Israel (particularly modern Israel) and the church, one tends to get the impression, based upon the reading of most ecclesiological studies, that the church is a divine afterthought, entirely disconnected from (or at best, only loosely associated with) the realities described in the Old Testament. Behind this issue, I sense even more serious underlying hermeneutical questions, such as the validity of the Old Testament for the believer living in the NT period, the hermeneutics of Scripture *per se* and the problem of how systematic theology is to be undertaken. While a discussion of these issues is impossible in the present context, acknowledging their presence may be an important step in overcoming some of their limitations. However, as could be seen in the publication of the 2002 monograph *Pensar la iglesia hoy: hacia una ecclesiológia adventista* there seems to be a growing awareness in Seventh-day Adventist scholarship (at least at the periphery!)⁴⁰ of the importance of and (to a certain degree) the continuity between the Old Testament and the New Testament, both of which are reflected in a truly biblical ecclesiology.

3. Linguistic Connections: The Use of ἐκκλησία and συναγωγή in the LXX

The standard lexica provide a good summary of the usage of the Greek terms ἐκκλησία "church" and συναγωγή "synagogue" in the context of the New Testament and the discussion need not be repeated here.⁴¹ Suffice it to say that ἐκκλησία is derived from the combination of the preposition ἐκ and the verb καλεω "to call out" and was mostly connected to official summons in classical Greek and appeared generally in political or highly-structured contexts.⁴² On the other hand συναγωγή had a much broader sense and referred to the collecting or bringing together of things and people.

⁴⁰ I use the term 'periphery' against the background of the center-periphery discussion that is raging in biblical hermeneutics, involving the interaction of Western theological thinking (= center) with non-Western (i.e., Asia, Africa, South and Central America) thinking.

⁴¹ Other relevant studies include Jack P. Lewis, "The Jewish Background of the Church," *ResQ* 2 (1958): 154-63, and I. Howard Marshall, "New Wine in Old Wineskins: V. The Biblical Use of the Word 'ekklesia,'" *ExpTim* 84 (1973): 359-64.

⁴² See in the relevant standard lexicons Lothar Coenen, "Church, Synagogue," *NIDNTT* 1:291-307; Karl Ludwig Schmidt, "ἐκκλησία," *TDNT* 3:501-36; Jürgen Roloff, "ἐκκλησία," *EDNT* 1:400-15; Wolfgang Schragen, "συναγωγή," *TDNT* 7:798-841; Hubert Frankemölle, "συναγωγή," *EDNT* 3:293-96.

However, in the context of the present study, we are mostly interested in the usage of the terms in the LXX, the Greek translation of the Old Testament that was frequently used in the early Christian church.⁴³ The lemma of ἐκκλησία appears 77 times in 73 verses in the LXX, excluding the Apocrypha,⁴⁴ while συναγωγή occurs 200 times in 186 verses.⁴⁵ Most of the ἐκκλησία references appear in texts describing the later period of the people of Israel or were written during this period (e.g., 1–2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, some of the Psalms). Due to the different translators, their varying familiarity with the Hebrew language,⁴⁶ and their distinct cultural and reli-

⁴³ For good introductions to the study of the Septuagint and its importance beyond the traditional text-critical studies see Raija Sollamo, "The Significance of Septuagint Studies," in Emanuel. *Studies in Hebrew Bible, Septuagint and Dead Sea Scrolls in Honor of Emanuel Tov* (ed. Shalom M. Paul, Robert A. Kraft, Lawrence H. Schiffman and Weston W. Fields; VTSup 94; Leiden: Brill, 2003), 497–512; Benjamin G. Wright III, "The Jewish Scriptures in Greek. The Septuagint in the Context of Ancient Translation Activity," in *Biblical Translation in Context* (ed. Frederick W. Knobloch; Studies and Texts in Jewish History and Culture 10; Bethesda: University Press of Maryland, 2002), 3–18; Albert C. Sundberg, Jr., "The Septuagint: The Bible of Hellenistic Judaism," in *The Canon Debate* (ed. Lee M. McDonald and James A. Sanders; Peabody: Hendrickson, 2002), 68–90; Karen H. Jobes and Moisés Silva, *Invitation to the Septuagint* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000); Natalio Fernández Marcos, *The Septuagint in Context. Introduction to the Greek Version of the Bible* (trans. W. G. E. Watson; Leiden: Brill, 2000); L. Greenspoon, "'It's all Greek to me': Septuagint Studies since 1968," *CurBS* 5 (1997): 147–74; and Anneli Aejmelaeus, *On the Trail of the Septuagint Translators. Collected Essays* (Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1993).

⁴⁴ Deut 4:10; 9:10; 18:16; 23:2–4, 9; 31:30; Josh 9:2; Judg 20:2; 21:5, 8; 1 Sam 17:47; 19:20; 1 Kgs 8:14, 22, 55, 65; 1 Chr 13:2, 4; 28:2, 8; 29:1, 10, 20; 2 Chr 1:3, 5; 6:3, 12–13; 7:8; 10:3; 20:5, 14; 23:3; 28:14; 29:23, 28, 31–32; 30:2, 4, 13, 17, 23–25; Ezra 2:64; 10:1, 8, 12, 14; Neh 5:7, 13; 7:66; 8:2, 17; 13:1; Pss 21:23, 26; 25:5, 12; 34:18; 39:10; 67:27; 88:6; 106:32; 149:1; Prov 5:14; Job 30:28; Mic 2:5; Joel 2:16; and Lam 1:10.

⁴⁵ Gen 1:9; 28:3; 35:11; 48:4; Exod 12:3, 6, 19, 47; 16:1–3, 6, 9–10, 22; 17:1; 23:16; 34:22, 31; 35:1, 4, 20; 38:22; 39:2; Lev 4:13–15, 21; 8:3–5; 9:5; 10:3, 6, 17; 11:36; 16:5, 17, 33; 19:2; 22:18; 24:14, 16; Num 1:2, 16, 18; 8:9, 20; 10:2–3, 7; 13:26; 14:1–2, 5, 7, 10, 27, 35–36; 15:14, 24–26, 33, 35–36; 16:2–3, 5–6, 9, 11, 16, 19, 21–22, 24, 26, 33; 17:7, 10, 12; 19:9, 20; 20:1–2, 4, 6, 8, 10–12, 22, 25, 27, 29; 22:4; 25:6–7; 26:2, 9–10; 27:2–3, 14, 16–17, 19, 21–22; 31:13, 16, 26–27, 43; 32:2, 15; 35:12, 24–25; Deut 5:22; 33:4; Josh 9:15, 18–19, 21, 27; 18:1; 20:3, 9; 22:16–17, 20, 30; Judg 14:8; 20:1; 21:10, 13, 16; 1 Kgs 12:20–21; 2 Chr 5:6; Esth 10:3; Pss 7:8; 15:4; 21:17; 39:11; 61:9; 67:31; 73:2; 81:1; 85:14; 105:17; 110:1; Prov 5:14; 21:16; Job 8:17; Obad 1:13; Zeph 3:8; Zech 9:12; Isa 19:6; 22:6; 37:25; 56:8; Jer 6:11; 27:9; 33:17; 38:4, 13; 51:15; Ezek. 26:7; 27:27, 34; 32:22; 37:10; 38:4, 7, 13, 15; Dan 8:25; 11:10–12.

⁴⁶ For a helpful introductory discussion of the issue, see Jan Joosten, "On the LXX Translators' Knowledge of Hebrew," in *Tenth Congress of the International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies, Oslo 1998* (ed. Bernard A. Taylor; SBLSCS 51; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2001), 165–79.

gious backgrounds, the LXX should not be interpreted as a monolithic translation, as, for example, modern translation projects of the Bible that center around basic general editorial principles and a fairly structured peer-evaluation process of the final product of the translation activity. Rather, the LXX clearly exhibits varying degrees of competence, differing translation techniques⁴⁷ and also often clear theological (or ideological) intentions.⁴⁸

A good example of these particular characteristics can be found in the employment of different Greek terms for one and the same Hebrew term or, vice versa, the apparent indistinct use of a particular Greek term as a translation of different Hebrew expressions.⁴⁹ For example, the Hebrew קָהָל "assembly, congregation, unit"⁵⁰ is translated by means of at least eight different Greek terms in the Septuagint, including ἐκκλησία , ἐξεκκλησιάζειν , λαός , ὄχλος , πλήθος , συναγωγή , συνέδριον , σύστασις .⁵¹ Similarly, Hebrew עַמ "congregation, group, ethnic or political group"⁵² is translated as ἐπισύστασις , λαός , παρεμβολή(?) , πλήθος , συναγωγή , and συστροφία .⁵³

⁴⁷ See, e.g., Zipora Talshir, "Linguistic Development and the Evaluation of Translation Technique in the Septuagint," in *Studies in Bible* (ed. Sara Japhet; ScrHier 31; Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1986), 301–20; Galen Marquis, "Consistency of Lexical Equivalents as a Criterion for the Evaluation of Translation Technique as Exemplified in the LXX of Ezekiel," in *Sixth Congress of the International Organization For Septuagint and Cognate Studies, Jerusalem 1986* (ed. Claude E. Cox; SBLSCS 23; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987), 405–24; Anneli Aejmelaeus, "Translation Technique and the Intention of the Translator," in *Seventh Congress of the International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies, Leuven 1989* (ed. Claude E. Cox; SBLSCS 31; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1991), 23–36.

⁴⁸ Some examples of studies dealing with tendencies in translations can be found in Kristin de Troyer, "Translation or Interpretation? A Sample from the Books of Esther," in *Tenth Congress of the International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies*, 343–53; and Johann Cook, "The Ideology of Septuagint Proverbs," in *Tenth Congress of the International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies*, 463–79.

⁴⁹ See the insightful discussion found in Tim McLay, "Lexical Inconsistency: Towards a Methodology for the Analysis of the Vocabulary in the Septuagint," in *Tenth Congress of the International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies*, 81–98. Cf. Cécile Dogniez, "The Greek Renderings of Hebrew Idiomatic Expressions and Their Treatment in the Septuagint Lexica," *JNSL* 28 (2002): 1–17, and Victoria Spottorno, "Lexical Variants in the Greek Text of Reigns and Chronicles," in *Tenth Congress of the International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies*, 63–80.

⁵⁰ HAL, 1009–1010.

⁵¹ Takamitsu Muraoka, *Hebrew/Aramaic Index to the Septuagint Keyed to the Hatch-Redpath Concordance* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 128.

⁵² HAL, 746.

⁵³ Muraoka, *Hebrew/Aramaic Index*, 108.

Both Hebrew terms (קהל and עדת) can indicate communities that are gathered for a religious purpose (although they are *not* limited to this religious usage)⁵⁴ and often appear in the same context in an interchangeable manner, as can be seen in the crucial chapter of Lev 16 where Moses calls the congregation (עדת) in verse 5,⁵⁵ but the atoning acts involve firstly Aaron himself, his household and the assembly (קהל; Lev 16:17, 33). Clearly, they appear to have functioned as synonyms (e.g., Lev 4:13), although only קהל has been translated with ἐκκλησία by the translators of the Septuagint. Milgrom suggests that no discernible difference between these terms can be ascertained and that the parallel use of קהל and עדת may be due to literary or stylistic reasons.⁵⁶ The noun עדת "assembly, congregation" occurs 149 times in the Old Testament⁵⁷ and can refer to the entire nation (Exod 16:1; Num 17:11, 20:1, etc.), all adult males (Num 14:1–4; 31:26), particularly those bearing arms (Judg 20:1), or to the tribal leaders meeting as an executive body (Exod 12:3, 21; Num 8:7, etc.). Baruch Levine suggests that the Hebrew term conveys the sense that the group was unified as a community on the basis of set principles.⁵⁸ The later rabbis interpreted עדת as the local assembly in the synagogue.⁵⁹

Did the translators of the Septuagint (whether or not they were Christian or Jewish)⁶⁰ consciously employ different equivalents for two Hebrew terms that were often used synonymously and connect them both to the congregation of Israel? How many of the semantic nuances as known from classical Greek, of either ἐκκλησία or συναγωγή, were deliberately trans-

⁵⁴ For קהל, see Exod 32:1; Lev 4:13, 14, 21; 16:17, 33; Deut 4:10; 9:10; 10:4, etc. For עדת, see Exod 12:3, 6, 19, 47; 16:10; 34:31; 35:1; Lev 16:5, etc.

⁵⁵ Interestingly, in Lev 16:15, the MT utilizes the Hebrew term עַם "people," in referring to the group benefiting from the sin offering. Similarly, also Lev 16:24, 33, where it is closely tied to קהל.

⁵⁶ Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16. A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 3; New York: Doubleday, 1991), 242–43.

⁵⁷ Abraham Even-Shoshan, *A New Concordance of the Old Testament Using the Hebrew and Aramaic Text* (Jerusalem: Kiryat Sefer, 1985), 834, and also D. Levy, Jacob Milgrom, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, "הַעֲדָה," TDOT 10:468–81, esp. 470.

⁵⁸ Baruch A. Levine, *Leviticus* (The JPS Torah Commentary 3; Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 22.

⁵⁹ Levy, Milgrom, Ringgren and Fabry, "הַעֲדָה," 10:469.

⁶⁰ See Mogens Müller, *The First Bible of the Church. A Plea for the Septuagint* (JSOTSup 106; Copenhagen International Seminar 1; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996); and Aejmelaeus, *On the Trail of the Septuagint Translators*.

ferred to the NT concept of the church, particularly in view of the fact that the early church, though marked by visible organizational characteristics, cannot be considered a tight administrative entity? It would appear that semantics alone, even when aided by a historical lens, will not provide all the necessary data in order to describe the concept of the church in the Old Testament. Semantics needs to be supplemented by a look at the larger conceptual framework. Our study of the metaphors and imagery that the NT writers employ in order to describe this new and strange entity called ἐκκλησία will be a helpful tool in the quest to understand the OT equivalent of the NT conception of the church.

4. Looking at the Larger Conceptual Framework: The Possibilities of Metaphors

The church is not a building or a generic administrative structure. As understood by the New Testament authors, the church is made up of people who interact with one another and together form something new that goes beyond the sum of the individual members. The anthropological nature of the church and its divine (i.e., non-repeatable) origin make metaphors an ideal vehicle to communicate its essence and nature. Metaphors are not mathematical formulas but living conceptual entities (which in the case of Scripture are also literary). They are often characterized by a multiplicity of meanings and require an existential and experimental response, particularly within the context of faith and Scripture. They help the reader or listener to grasp a particular concept that is often highly abstract or entirely new.

The Epistle to the Ephesians contains a number of metaphors that are relevant for a biblical ecclesiology. *Family* (1:5, 11, 17, 18b; 2:18, 19; 3:14; 4:6, 14; 5:1, 23, 24, 25; 6:6, 9), *buildings* (2:20, 21, 22; 3:17; 4:12) and *body* (1:10, 23; 2:1, 5, 6, 10, 11, 15, 16; 3:6, 10; 4:3, 4, 12, 13, 15, 16, 18, 22, 24; 5:8, 23, 27, 29, 32; 6:13, 14, 15, 16, 17) are clearly the most important and appear also elsewhere in the New Testament in contexts relevant for our study of the church.⁶¹ It

⁶¹ The extensive biblical references are based upon my detailed study of the metaphor map of the Epistle to the Ephesians. See Gerald A. Klingbeil, "Metaphors and Pragmatics: An Introduction to the Hermeneutics of Metaphors in the Epistle to the Ephesians," *BBR* 16 (2006): 273–93, which discusses many contributions to the discussion of metaphors for the church. The most significant recent treatments of the subject include John K. McVay, "Ecclesial Metaphor in the Epistle to the Ephesians from the Perspective of a Modern Theory of Metaphor" (Ph.D. diss., University of Sheffield, 1995); Elna Mouton, "The

would seem that, partially at least, these metaphors have been taken from the Old Testament. With the family metaphor, for example, Adam is called Ἀδὰμ τοῦ θεοῦ "Adam (son) of God" in Luke 3:38, a phrase that does not appear like this in the Old Testament, although it should be remembered that creation always places the creator in a particular relationship with his creation.⁶² The fact that Luke includes this remarkable statement in the genealogy of Jesus underlines the universal sonship of Jesus. He is not only a descendent of David, the true Messiah for the Jewish nation, but he is, through his incarnation, part and parcel of universal humanity that is related by creation sonship to the creator. The same motif of sonship also occurs in Exod 4:22 which reads בְּרֵאשִׁית יְהוָה בְּנִי בְּכֹרִי יִשְׂרָאֵל "thus says YHWH: Israel is my son, my firstborn."⁶³ In the context of the Exodus, the sonship of Israel and its primogeniture⁶⁴ should be understood against the background of the new nation that is being born.⁶⁵ An important detail should be noted here. The biblical text refers to two important connotations of Israel: firstly, it is YHWH's son, but, secondly, it is also the firstborn son, which would suggest the existence of other sons as well. These other "sons" (= nations) have already appeared in the table of nations in Gen 10:1–32, followed by the particular focus upon the descendents of Shem found in Gen 11:10–32.⁶⁶

Communicative Power of the Epistle to the Ephesians," in *Rhetoric, Scripture and Theology. Essays from the 1994 Pretoria Conference* (ed. Stanley E. Porter and Thomas H. Olbricht; JSNTSup 131; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 280–307, and Gregory W. Dawes, *The Body in Question: Metaphor and Meaning in the Interpretation of Ephesians 5:21–33* (Biblical Interpretation 30; Leiden: Brill, 1998).

⁶² Darrell L. Bock, *Luke. Volume 1: 1:1–9:50* (BECNT 38; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 360. In Egyptian texts the deity is often associated with human beings by means of the concept of sonship or adoption. See Merling Alomía, "El motivo del בְּכֹרִי en el libro de Exodo," in *Inicios, fundamentos y paradigmas: estudios teológicos y exegéticos en el Pentateuco* (ed. Gerald A. Klingbeil; Serie monográfica de estudios bíblicos y teológicos de la Universidad Adventista del Plata 1; Libertador San Martín, Argentina: River Plate Adventist University Press, 2004), 196–97.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ The subject has been treated in detail in Frederick E. Greenspahn, *When Brothers Dwell Together. The Preeminence of Younger Siblings in the Hebrew Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

⁶⁵ It is interesting to note that Exod 1:9 contains the first reference to Israel as עַם "people," not just as the "sons of Israel." There is a socio-political change taking place. Interestingly, this description is put in the mouth of the nameless Pharaoh.

⁶⁶ Gary N. Knoppers, "Shem, Ham and Japheth: The Universal and the Particular in the Genealogy of Nations," in *The Chronicler as Theologian. Essays in Honor of Ralph W. Klein* (ed. M. Patrick Graham et al.; JSOTSup 371; London: T & T Clark, 2003), 13–31, has re-

The sonship of Israel is also referred to in other Old Testament contexts as can be seen in Deut 14:1; 32:5, 19; Isa 1:2; 43:6; 45:11; 63:8; Jer 3:14, 19, 22; and Hos 2:1 and 11:1.⁶⁷ The references in Hosea are particularly intriguing. Hosea portrays YHWH as a father who teaches his son how to take his first independent steps (Hos 11:3). However, Israel rejects the hand of divine guidance and as a result will face hardship and exile (Hos 11:4–6). Other OT references reiterate the parental character of YHWH, a crucial element of the family metaphor, involving both fatherly⁶⁸ and motherly characteristics.⁶⁹ YHWH's motherly characteristics involve birthing experiences (e.g., Isa 1:2; 42:14; 46:3) and the compassion so typical of a mother (Isa 49:15). These parental images are highly significant in our search for a dominant Old Testament metaphor that reappears in the NT writings in an ecclesiological context.

Connected to the family metaphor one should look at the larger socio-economic context of ancient Israelite society. The Hebrew *am* "people" must not be confused with the modern concept of "nation" that has characterized the past 150 years of Western culture. The clan and the tribe, based upon the extended family, played a vital role in ancient Mediterranean societies, including Israel.⁷⁰ Interestingly, up to this day, clan and tribal loyalties are

cently discussed the importance of the universality of the genealogies in 1–2 Chronicles. Cf. Yigal Levin, "Understanding Biblical Genealogies," *CurBS* 9 (2001): 11–46, and Walter E. Aufrecht, "Genealogy and History in Ancient Israel," in *Ascribe to the Lord: Biblical and Other Essays in Memory of Peter C. Craigie* (ed. Peter C. Craigie, Lyle M. Eslinger and Glen Taylor; JSOTSup 67; Sheffield: JSOT, 1988), 205–35.

⁶⁷ Cornelis Houtman, *Exodus. Vol. 1* (Historical Commentary on the Old Testament; Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1993), 13.

⁶⁸ See, e.g., Deut 32:6; 2 Sam 7:12–14 [talking to David]; 1 Chr 17:13; 22:10; 28:6; 29:10; Isa 63:16; 64:7 [ET 8], etc.

⁶⁹ See now David Russell Tasker, "The Fatherhood of God: An Exegetical Study from the Hebrew Scriptures" (Ph.D. diss., Andrews University, 2002). Concerning the motherly characteristics of God see John J. Schmitt, "The Motherhood of God and Zion as Mother," *RB* 92 (1985): 557–69; Marc Zvi Brettler, "Incompatible Metaphors for YHWH in Isaiah 40–66," *JSOT* 78 (1998): 97–120; Gerald A. Klingbeil and Chantal J. Klingbeil, "Metáforas femeninas de Dios en Isaías—reflexiones sobre la hermenéutica de la teología feminista," *Theo* 14 (1999): 38–65.

⁷⁰ Øystein Stan LaBianca and Randy W. Younker, "The Kingdoms of Ammon, Moab and Edom: the Archaeology of Society in Late Bronze/Iron Age Transjordan (ca. 1400–500 BCE)," in *The Archaeology of Society in the Holy Land* (ed. Thomas E. Levy; London: Leicester University Press, 1998), 399–415; Baruch A. Levine, "The Clan-Based Economy of Biblical Israel," in *Symbiosis, Symbolism, and the Power of the Past. Canaan, Ancient Israel, and Their Neighbors from the Late Bronze Age through Roman Palestina* (ed. William G. Dever

far more important than national interests. While there may be an ethnic component to the concept of tribe, recent anthropological research has shown that clans and tribes in the ancient world were not exclusively based on ethnic considerations, but often focused on common worldview or ideological or theological premises.⁷¹ Common origin and verifiable descent are indeed important, although some anthropologists would also emphasize the shared territory of tribal members.⁷² In this sense those from the "outside" who adopt a particular set of cultural or religious values can become fully admitted into the tribe regardless of their ethnicity.⁷³ Clan and tribal mentality also involves a highly developed system of corporate (or collective) responsibility, as can be seen in the sin of Achan and its subsequent punishment in Josh 7.⁷⁴ It does, however, also involve collective blessings. The church in the New Testament picks up where the family, clan, and tribe of the Old Testament left off: a group, not based upon ethnicity, but sharing similar values and worldview. One should also not forget that in the OT people that did not belong to a particular group based on their ethnic background could become members of that group. Rahab is incorporated into Israel's tribal system (Josh 2; 6:17–25) as is Ruth (Ruth 1:16–22). The social institution of the גֵר "new-comer, sojourner" is known widely in the Old Testament and is only one of about seven Hebrew terms that denote a foreigner, thus indicating the importance of the concept.⁷⁵ The Mosaic law con-

and Seymour Gitin; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2003), 445–53. For a more general introduction to family (and societal) structures in the time of the Old Testament see Daniel I. Block, "Marriage and Family in Ancient Israel," in *Marriage and Family in the Biblical World* (ed. Ken M. Campbell; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2003), 33–102. Cf. Carol L. Meyers, "The Family in Early Israel," in *Families in Ancient Israel*, 1–47; Joseph Blenkinsopp, "The Family in First Temple Israel," in *Families in Ancient Israel*, 48–103.

- ⁷¹ See the important remarks on this point found in Randall W. Younker, "Moabite Social Structure," *BA* 60 (1997): 237–48; also LaBianca and Younker, "The Kingdoms of Ammon, Moab and Edom," 404–6.
- ⁷² See the helpful comments and further citations found in Daniel E. Fleming, *Democracy's Ancient Ancestors. Mari and Early Collective Governance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 24–28.
- ⁷³ I am indebted here to comments and interaction with my colleague and friend Professor Richard M. Davidson from the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University.
- ⁷⁴ See my more detailed discussion in Klingbeil, "Entre individualismo y colectivismo," 3–22.
- ⁷⁵ See Bernadeth Carmen Caero Bustillos, "Liebt Gott den גֵר," *BN* 111 (2002): 48–65, discussing the Hebrew terms גֵר, תושב, אֲחֵר, זָר, נֶגֶר, נָכַר, and קָטָר. Cf. Harold V. Bennett, *Injustice Made Legal. Deuteronomic Law and the Plight of Widows, Strangers, and Orphans in Ancient Israel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002); Rolf Rendtorff, "The גֵר in the Priestly

body imagery where the well-being (or lack thereof) of one member affects the entire body.

On the other hand, the faithfulness of one member of the tribe (= body) will result in multiple blessings for the rest of the group, as can be seen in the ministry of the judges or the summary statement of some of the kings of Judah who, due to their actions, cause YHWH to bless his people.⁷⁸ The interactive nature of the body metaphor is closely connected to the dyadic personality of ancient Mediterranean cultures with its particular emphasis upon the group.⁷⁹ A good definition of a dyadic personality is the following: "Every individual is perceived as embedded in some other, in a sequence of embeddedness, so to say [...] Identity is a product of interactive relationships rather than individualistic ego-formation."⁸⁰ It seems to me that all these elements can not only be found in the Christian concept of church, but also represent an important theological aspect of the NT ethical, moral, and religious teachings. In this sense, the New Testament concept of church appears to be not only the continuation of an already known and widely visible OT concept, but involves theological premises that are rooted in the divine acts of creation and salvation.

5. Conclusions: The "Church" in the Old Testament

The Old Testament generally plays a marginal or non-existent role in current ecclesiological studies, as it is generally assumed that the church only came into existence after the ascension of Jesus Christ. As a result, the Old Testament is not consulted for conceptual information about the church. This kind of reasoning seems to be rather prevalent in systematic ecclesio-

⁷⁸ Unfortunately, it must be recognized that the negative tendency is much more prominent in the Old Testament.

⁷⁹ For a good introduction to the dyadic element of ancient cultures see Jerome H. Neyrey, "Dyadism," in *Biblical Social Values and Their Meaning* (ed. John J. Pilch and Bruce J. Malina; Peabody: Hendrickson, 1993), 49-52; John J. Pilch, "Cooperativeness," 33-36 of the same volume, and more recently, K. C. Hanson, "Sin, Purification, and Group Process," in *Problems in Biblical Theology. Essays in Honor of Rolf Knierim* (ed. Henry T. C. Sun et al.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 167-91, esp. 170-71.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 171.

logical discussion and may indicate some troubling hermeneutical presuppositions that rate the *New Testament* over against the *Old Testament*.⁸¹

I would like to challenge this notion on two major grounds: first, the concept of the church is *not* exclusively defined lexically. To put it more explicitly: the existence (or lack thereof) of the Greek terms of ἐκκλησία and συναγωγή in the Greek translation of the Old Testament should not be taken as the sole data relevant for an ecclesiology of the Old Testament. Terminology and semantics change in the course of time, as can be seen in the use of these terms in classical Greek, which do not show a great affinity to their usage in Koine Greek. Secondly, conceptual data need to be taken into consideration alongside the lexical data. I have suggested that the three main metaphors that the NT writers (and particularly Paul in Ephesians) employ to describe important facets and principles of the church include family, buildings, and, most importantly, the body. The family as well as the body metaphor are visibly present in the Old Testament and do not only have their origin in Israel's experience, but are employed even before the foundation of the tribal conglomerate that we know as "Israel." God's relationship with Israel is also expressed in terms of sonship and the parent characteristics of YHWH (both father and mother) are clearly visible in the textual data of the Old Testament. The body metaphor often involves the relationship between the whole and its individual parts in NT ecclesiology, which is also visible in the Old Testament within the context of the community of Israel.

It is clear that what has been presented here cannot describe the complete picture. While Israelite society showed a marked openness (particularly when compared to their ancient Near Eastern neighbors)⁸² to the foreigner (especially the גֵּר) and famous examples such as Rahab and Ruth are integrated into the genealogy of the Davidic (and thus messianic) lineage, there are other examples of bias, such as the issue of the exogamous marriages and the insistence on speaking the Hebrew language in the narratives of Ezra-Nehemiah.⁸³

⁸¹ Cf. Rex Mason, "The Old Testament/Hebrew Bible," in *The Biblical World. Volume 1* (ed. John Barton; London: Routledge, 2002), 5.

⁸² See Caero Bustillos, "Liebt Gott den גֵּר," 50-51.

⁸³ However, it should not be forgotten that language and marriage are not only civic or cultural phenomena, but forms which powerfully communicate distinct values. Concerning the rash reaction of Nehemiah towards the linguistic preference of some children of the mixed marriages (Neh 13:23-25), Chantal Klingbeil suggests that, since language acquisition is always connected to the acquisition of values, socio-linguistic pragmatics

However, the conceptual evidence suggests close connections between the New and the Old Testament that may provide new impetus to the study of a *biblical* ecclesiology. Perhaps it is time to renew our commitment to the complete Word of God and discover practical and relevant principles of the church in places that at first glance may seem irrelevant or out-of-date.

may provide a helpful angle to understand Nehemiah's strong reaction. In this sense the formula no language of Judah = no values of Judah seems to be justified. See Chantal J. Klingbeil, "Mirando más allá de las Palabras. Pragmática lingüística y su aplicación a los estudios bíblicos," in *Entender la Palabra. Hermenéutica adventista para el nuevo siglo* (ed. Merling Alomía et al.; Cochabamba: Bolivian Adventist University Press, 2000), 123–35, esp. 124–25. Compare also my study of this crucial issue in Gerald A. Klingbeil, "'Not So Happily Ever After...': Cross-Cultural Marriages in the Time of Ezra-Nehemiah," (paper to be presented at the Society of Biblical Literature Annual Meeting, Biblical Law section, Washington D.C., November 19, 2006).