Understanding 'body of Christ' in the Letter to the Ephesians*

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ABSTRACT

'Body of Christ' could be figure or metaphor, or corporate entity. Broader horizons on language, literature and religious phenomena, open up to a less formalistic approach and sensitises to respect religious phenomena such as mysticism and apocalypticism—often considered to be maverick elements. By redefining the text as the culmination of an extended interactive process, reflecting mere glimmerings of the real nature of its history, opens up possibilities for understanding. Reappraising the Judaic fabric of Christianity, leads to a more adequate assimilation of apocalypticism, mysticism and Gnosticism as 'interfaces'. These developed close to the formation of the New Testament and shaped Christianity, which did not emerge as the vaunted 'pristine orthodoxy'. This leaves room for elements such as hekhalot and merkavah mysticism to (via an incipient shiur qomah concept) to provide the key to understand 'body of Christ' in Ephesians. This body would be a mystical extension of its Head into this world.

1 'BODY [OF CHRIST]'1 IN EPSHEINS: A KEY CONCEPT

1.1 Introduction

Although the concept 'soma' occurs only nine2 times in Ephesians (1:23; 2:16; 4:4, 4:12, 4:16 (2 times); 5:23, 5:28, and 5:30), one of which refers to the human body, it is nevertheless a salient concept and could serve as a key3 for unlocking the communicative 'secret' of this letter.

* It is an honour and privilege for this former student of Prof John Henry Roberts to investigate 'body of Christ' in Ephesians. I surmise that both topics are still his 'first love' in the study of the New Testament. Under his tutelage I obtained an even greater admiration and appreciation for Ephesians, the 'Switzerland' of the New Testament.

1 Since 'body' is not always directly linked to the qualifier 'of Christ', I place this qualifier in brackets, to indicate that this qualification needs to be argued. Focussing on the ecclesiastical significance of 'body' in Ephesians, does not deny other possible referents.

2 One could calculate ten times if one adds σῶσαμαι from 3:6, cf Bachmann & Slaby 1980.

3 I am not averring that it is the key, since such a key does not exist. As is clear from existing research, it is simply fallacious to postulate any one key for the understanding of Ephesians. The binding factor for all the threads of argument can be found in the
The question should be posed whether body-head is merely a metaphor. I will endeavour to answer this toward the end of this essay, but first a brief excursus on metaphor and meta-reality, in which I argue for a postmodern view of metaphor.

1.2 Metaphor and meta-reality

I argued elsewhere (Lemmer 1998b) that epistemic possibilities are created by the use of metaphor, by means of which an author may point his/her readers to meta-realities. This use of the metaphor is understood more clearly if one looks at it from a postmodern way. ‘Why a postmodern5 perspective?’ Among others I would like to answer in the words of Ward (1996:132ff, quoting Bauman): ‘Postmodernity, one may as well say, brings ‘re-enchantment’ of the world after the protracted and earnest, though in the end inconclusive, modern struggle to dis-enchant it.’ It is the re-evaluation of ambivalence, mystery, excess and aporia as they adhere to, are constituted by, and disrupt the rational, that lies behind the re-enchantment of the world. Reality is no longer tabulated and evaluated in terms of empirical fact. ‘The world is mul-

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contingent situation which this letter was addressing. As it is commonly accepted now, final retrieval of this/ese contingent situation/s, is/are impossible. An informed guess of the nature of such a situation, as imperfect as it may be, is nevertheless imperative.

4 Cf Pelser (1998:124–132) argues, to my mind correctly, that we are dealing with a certain reality of ‘one-ness’ between two entities, which although they can only be fully of the same nature in the eschaton, is presently real in a pneumatic sense. In existential terms this is correct. However, I do not think that this dualism entered the minds of author and readers. The author argues his case of oneness as if it is real here and now, and this have certain rhetorical implications for the rhetorical situation being addressed; the readers had better believe in this datum, since this would solve the exigence of their situation. The way in which a less positivistic (or if you want to, a more postmodern) approach orientates one regarding phenomena such as metaphor, is that it contains potentialities that can point beyond their immediate referents, such as in aesthetic and religious texts.

5 I espouse to certain tenets of this movement, not least to its holism and attempt at re-integrating facets of inquiry, to its advocacy of tolerance and qualitative acceptance of the perception of reality as observed by ‘the other’. Furthermore, I espouse to a ‘truncated’ view of the postmodern; postmodernism can and does only exist coterminously as a ‘mutation’, as well as a cutting off of the moorings of modernism’. Ward (1996:132f) points out how Lyotard already observed that postmodernism is not a ‘period concept’. It is an aspect of modernism itself; this much is clear when one observes Kant’s respect for ambiguity and aporia, as already being at work in the Enlightenment project. Ironically, the same could be observed in Descartes, Marx, Nietzsche and Freud. I say ‘ironically’, because Descartes is usually referred to as the ‘father of modernism’. An imperative and valuable shift of emphasis emerges regarding rhetoric, literature, language and also regarding metaphor when allowing postmodern perspectives to dominate.
multiple worlds; and worlds are created by, and shift within, nets of signs and symbols pointing beyond themselves towards other nets of signs and symbols’ (Ward 1996:132–133; my italics). Following Gordon (1995:19ff), I argue that the adherence to a strict distinction between vehicle and tenor be negated, since there is much more to metaphor. Metaphor points6 to realities beyond themselves, by means of ‘doubling’. Gordon (1995:19) draws a distinction between ‘dual’ and ‘double’: ‘[T]o be dual is to be both the same and different, while to be double is to be different and the same.’ Metaphoric ‘doubling’ (rather than duelling) refers to the two distinct units that are one; the A and the B of metaphor become respectively B and A. Because metaphor is double, neither one nor two, a gap in meaning takes place, which now separates the metaphor from itself.7 To conclude on this ‘doubling’ nature of metaphor, he (1995:20) explains: ‘Consequently, any definition of metaphor will, in describing it as something, elide this gap and so on, by offering a partial truth of resemblance, yield metaphors of metaphorization.’ He then asks how one can define metaphor when it is nothing by logical terms; when it brings about an identity which is not an identity. Thus (now in reference to Protagoras), we are caught up between the Scylla and the Charybdis of recognising our inability to understand the phenomenon of metaphor, and the inevitable failure of our every recognition. This leads to the inference that all one can ever do about metaphor, is to return to metaphor—particularly when one realises that rationalities are local, specific and embedded within cultures and language. This broadens the possibilities of ‘knowing and understanding’, also a broadened understanding of metaphor/s, and the way an author may specifically employ it/them.

Thus I maintain that body-head may well be metaphorical, but ‘metaphor’ then in the above sense of doubling: both different and the same.

1.3 Some current interpretations of the body of Christ in Ephesians

As in the Paulines,9 a number of suggestions have been made to explain both the background and the understanding of body of Christ in Ephesians.

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6 That does not mean they prove such realities, but an author utilises them to point at them.

7 Vincente (1996:195) would concur with this, in rejecting a purely semantic analysis in terms of linguistic meaning of metaphor.

8 In the nature of postmodernism, it is clear that nothing measurable nor conclusive can be achieved by this kind of endeavour. What is presented below about the ‘pragmatics’ of metaphor is impressionistic and suggestive.

9 The nature of Paul’s relationship to the Letter to the Ephesians is argued below (§2.2).
The following is indicative of current understanding of this notion in Ephesians. Roberts (1991:59), commenting on 1:22-23, explains:

The body of Christ (TEV: Christ's body) indicates the close and inseparable relationship between Jesus and the church. The image expresses the notion that the Anointed is the Representative of God's people, and the members have been incorporated or included in himself when he brought salvation to pass....What has happened to the Anointed has happened to them...[my italics].

It appears from the rest of his commentary that the above more or less comprises the essence of Roberts' interpretation of the nature of the 'body' in Ephesians. This essence is, that the basis of the 'close and inseparable relationship between Jesus and the church' is their incorporation into what he has done for them; thus a 'representation'. And as is also clear from his commentary on the respective occurrences, the body is a corporate entity, made up of those who are incorporated into Christ because of his work for them.

Arnold's (1989:158-160) viewpoint is very similar to that of Roberts. He

10 The authors chosen are a random selection of relatively recent materials immediately available. These may not be representative of all interpretations.

11 The comments at the other junctures (qv Roberts 1991) are as follows: 2:16—one body, all those from two groups of people; 3:6—the same body, the Gentiles are now included in God's plan of salvation; 4:4—one body and one Spirit, Roberts remarks on the connection between body and Spirit. It is the Spirit who is responsible for the practical experience of their incorporation as members of the body of Christ; 4:12—build up the body of Christ. Here the collocation acquires a new function since it introduces the matter of the organic functioning of the church (there is also possible stress on organic unity, as well as an incorporation of missionary extension of the body); 4:16 (2X)—this furthers 4:12, although it includes more, since it also returns to the image of the 'one new man' of 2:15; 4:16 (cont)—the last part of v 15 brings the relationship of head body into focus. Roberts maintains that we have two images here, and the nature of the problem is in the way these two are related. He further remarks on the gifts which the various members of the body use to build themselves up; 5:23—alogous to head to body (that is Christ-to-church) is the marriage relationship. From this one may deduce that the headship of Christ implies more than authority. In fact, it implies unity with Christ because of their origin in him. This origin is founded on the salvation Christ wrought for the church (and that seems all); 5:28—as their own bodies. Basically the reference is to the physical body of the husband—and the message is clear—the example of the care for that body should constitute the basis of care of husbands for their wives; 5:30—because we are members of his body. Christ has thus cared for the believers, the members of his body.

12 There are many other rich nuances pointed out as the text requires comment. But overall one may sum up the nature of the body and its relationship as representation, incorporation and rulership and the key to this interpretation is the history of Israel-Christ-church; thus 'salvation-historical'. My criticism against this interpretation, is the thesis of the present essay. There were also other 'interfaces' at work when Ephesians was shaped; interfaces more contemporaneous with the letter.

13 I only refer to the pertinent discussion in his chapter 6, 'Images of the church', since this provides the essence. Obviously, there are other references elsewhere in his book.
argue[s] against the Hellenistic "macroanthropos" derivation in favour of an OT and Jewish understanding of σώμα as corporate personality with κεφαλή to be understood as "superior," or "ruler." I have also found that Ephesians combined this OT view of "head" with contemporary Greek medical ideas to give parallel expression to the dynamic presence of Christ in the body (see chapter 4). As "head" Christ is not only sovereign, but is also the causation of the movement of the body, the dynamic empowering and coordinating the body.

More extensive is his earlier (Arnold 1989:79–85) discussion, where he relates the head to the powers. Besides the 'superiority' dimension of 'head' in this context (Eph 1:20ff), he adds that the Ephesian author '...appears to stretch more meaning out of the term when he applies it to the church. In verse 23, the "head" has become coordinated with a "body" which is the church, or the body of Christ.' After Arnold negates the Gnostic redeemer myth (and I think justifiably so), he refers to some definitive research in this regard. He points out that this head-body correlation could be a development of the Pauline concept of the body of Christ. Pertinent is the following (:80): 'The idea may have originally been planted in Paul's mind in his encounter with the Christ along the Damascus road, where the risen Christ identifies himself with the followers: "Why do you persecute me?"'14 His discussion of 'fullness' (:82–85) as it appears in Eph 1:23 and relates to head-body, is noteworthy. Unfortunately, he ends with the usual conclusion on this matter.15 Lincoln (1990)16 holds to the following: On Ephesians 1:22–23 he remarks (67ff) that the sense of 'leader' for headship (κεφαλή being derived from the Old Testament via the LXX) underlies also the head over all things in Ephesians; also head over the church, its body (:68). Strictly head and body is kept separate here, but because of their juxtaposition in Colossians they are related here. After dismissing the host of interesting possibilities by referring to more possibilities than scholars usually do, he moves closer to

14 However, I think he goes astray when he argues that this links up with the notion of corporate personality. He himself realises this (:81): '...we are left with the difficulty of how to interpret "head".' He resorts to the possibility of a physiological explanation, derived from earlier Greek works (as was observed by Markus Barth). True, the latter does offer help with the understanding of Eph 4:14ff, but I think there is more to this, and Arnold is right; more than the corporate personality explanation.

15 There is promise here for better interpretation, but I think that it is doctrinally constrained when he concludes: 'The idea of the church filling or completing Christ is entirely foreign to the rest of the ecclesiological thought of Ephesians and Colossians and also the rest of the NT.'

16 It does not seem as if he devotes any specific discussion or excursus to this notion. He simply comments on the respective occurrences en loco. Thus I merely try to signal his understanding in a broad sense.
the idea that in Colossians 'body' and 'cosmos' are related. This enables the application of this notion to the church in Ephesians. The church in Ephesians is Christ's fullness; being filled by Christ.

When discussing 3:6, he (180–181) argues that the *hapax legomenon* (*sussoma*) could best be translated as 'concorporeal or sharers in the same body' (on the basis of a rendering by J A Robinson), and by means of this the author is drawing attention to the unity of the church in itself, rather than to her unity with the Israel of the past. Ephesians 4:12 refers back to 4:4, where it in turn refers back to 1:23 and 2:15. Lincoln remarks that in the latter case one should interpret it to refer to the two groupings that were united, namely Jews and Gentiles. His comments on 5:30–32 do not offer any different information on the head-body relationship.

Of all the immediately relevant passages for this essay, Moritz (1996:9–22) only deals with 1:20–23. He (21) relies substantially on the work done by Arnold. On the 'headship' of Christ he comments that the '...extra dimension of Christ's superiority compares with the limited authority given to Adam...he has been appointed head of the church and over the powers.'

Best (1998:189–196) devotes a separate section on 'the body of Christ'. He argues that the usual fable interpretation could be the key to the understanding of the use of the metaphor in Ephesians. However, what undercuts this interpretation according to him is the lack of stress on the diversity of gifts in Ephesians. Distinct from the earlier epistles (Best 1989:193), is the identification of Christ as the head of the body. He eventually concludes that in Ephesians, Christ as head is both 'overlord' and source (in the sense of 'Stamnwater').

17 Overall, I agree that this 'autarkic' unity is the main argument of the author; rather than indicating some salvation-historical continuation with Israel of the church. The author is rather proving that by other means and 'mechanisms', God has made inclusion of the Gentiles possible; not least by the 'body of Christ' creation.

18 His main argument (8–22) is the nature of the use of Ps 110 in this Ephesian passage. His thesis is that there is a more direct use of OT passages in Ephesians. What he does not appear to consider is the way in which Ps 110 played a role in Jewish merkavah and hekhalot mysticism, which would be my contention.

19 This of course accords with the purpose of his thesis, namely to show the 'struggle' motif of the church in Ephesians.

20 This constitutes number IV, of numerous 'Detached notes', which he devotes to salient concepts in this letter. This is a rather 'detached' note, since much of the discussion centres on the understanding of head and body in Romans, and especially in Corinthians. This note follows as an excursus after his discussion of 1:20–23.

21 I too, would not opt for the 'fable' interpretation. However, although one can agree that diversity of gifts is not uppermost in the mind of the Ephesian author, there is something of this present in 4:7–16.
To summarise: The above reflections all present varying possible explanations of both tenor and vehicle of the (head-)body metaphor. Much of this is useful to explain the tenor aspect of metaphor. However, not one of these propagates a Jewish 'mystical' interpretation (as vehicle), or points out the pervasive nature of 'body of Christ' in Ephesians. Thus 'body of Christ' is not given the possible prominence for the rhetorical situation of Ephesians, and more importantly, other possible interfaces need to be drawn into a study of 'body' in Ephesians.

The thesis of this essay is not only that the body (and head) concepts in Ephesians may explain something of the rhetorical situation, but also that aspects of early Jewish mysticism underlie the understanding of 'body of Christ'. These possibilities are to be tested.

2 ASSUMPTIONS THAT UNDERLIE A DIFFERENT UNDERSTANDING OF 'BODY OF CHRIST' IN EPHESIANS

2.1 Four assumptions

This investigation rests on four assumptions discussed below: the conceptual framework of the author and of the readers of Ephesians, is firmly embedded in that of Paul, the Apostle (§2.2); the underlying narrative that embodies the rhetorical situation is of a composite and complex exigence which relates to the situation of the readers (§2.3); an essential religio-historical element in the rhetorical situation is of a particular Jewish-mystical nature (§2.4); and any 'anti-mystical' understanding of 'body of Christ' in Ephesians should be rejected (§2.5).

2.2 An undeniable Pauline conceptual framework

The interpretation of 'headship' and 'body' is related to the authenticity of Ephesians, since it is sometimes maintained that Ephesians proclaims a different understanding of these. Christ is then not the 'Head' of the church in Romans and 1 Corinthians. The church has a more 'universal' purview in Ephesians (and Colossians), and so on. Since the latter view would be 'un-Pauline', the authenticity of the last two letters is questioned. If Pauline authorship is denied as is often done currently— in what measure may one link the mind set of this letter to that of the person of Paul? A related problem is the 'provenance', and therefore what matrix could be assumed for the conceptual framework of the letter? Adjoined to this is the question of Ephesians' relationship to Colossians. This relationship may hold definite and important interpretational keys for understanding Ephesians. Any decision on this always remains tentative. I maintain that Ephesians probably fol-
Furthermore, the fairly widely accepted possibility of Ephesians being a circular is accepted, which served to address a wider range of congregations in Asia Minor. Moritz (1996:220) opines that although Ephesians draws on material from Colossians, it is enriched with Old Testament traditions. The reason for this would be that Ephesians is for a more Jewish-minded audience.

The conceptual framework of the author (if he is someone other than Paul) and of the readers is firmly embedded in that of Paul the Apostle. However, let us for the sake of argument assume that this letter was written by a disciple of Paul, or of a Pauline school. Then one may at least assume that this 'school' or disciple, would have very closely and meticulously followed the essence of the teaching and mindset of the historical Paul, in order to counter the underlying rhetorical situation acceptably and convincingly. This is a safe assumption, since the reader circle may have somehow known the real person or his teaching; otherwise the personal references to the author (in Eph 3 and 6) would simply be redundant if not non-sensical. On the same grounds, a very late date is to be rejected.

Affirming a very staunch Pauline tradition, could confirm links and resemblances between the narrative about the historical Paul, and the Paul which is cast as the author and narrator within this letter. That is, the narrative contained therein, allows a link with the story about the 'real' Paul and his experiences. This would also allow a link to the disclosure/s (revelation/s) by

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22 Lemmer 1988:26ff. If these letters were written by the same author, it could have happened in this way: knowledge of the problems besetting the Colossian community reached the author first. He replied to this by means of the Letter to the Colossians. On his return from this community, Tychicus (the bearer of both letters), reported the wider extent and the different but related nature of the problem, which Colossians was meant to address. Then the Letter to the Ephesians emanated and spoke to this 'wider' and 'different' problem, hence also the possibility of Ephesians being a circular.

23 Moritz (220) is undoubtedly correct to assume that the inclusion of these traditions may provide reasons for the existence of Ephesians.

24 Moritz (1996:219-220) points out an interesting point when considering authorship. Remarking on the relationship Ephesians-Colossians, he points out (219-220) how most scholars regard Ephesians as non-Pauline. One problem '... with this is the curious verbatim overlap between the references to Tychicus in both letters (Col 4.7f and Eph 6.12f). Why would an imitator of the apostle have quoted phrases which are far too situation-related to be re-applicable in a different letter situation?' Although not an absolutely compelling argument for Pauline authorship, it is a factor to be considered. This argument by Moritz simply underscores again that there is still no conclusive evidence against Pauline authorship.

25 The use of the word 'historical' is not to suggest that one can ever arrive at the exact person as he existed. However, at least the implied author is somehow reflected in this text.
God of his plan for all the ages, linked to the calling experience which Paul had on the Road to Damascus.

What particular facet of Paul's revelatory experience/s—Damascus Road, or later—could have influenced his view of the body of Christ? For this I refer to the conclusions in 2.5 below.

2.3 A composite and complex exigence

The underlying narrative embodying the rhetorical situation is based on a composite and complex exigence, which underlie the situation of the readers. This necessitates a construction of a précis of such a narrative of this letter (cf Lemmer [1998b]); a narrative in which particularly the relationship between the implied author and readers, and the implied author and his mandate, is narrated for various rhetorical reasons.

The question arises how to construct such possible narrative without ending up in a one-sided mirror-reading of the text. One way to obviate such truncated reading is to invert the tenor of the textual indicators, and not to read the text on a one-to-one basis. This necessitates a brief discussion of the nature of communication.

Excursus: Communication as an interactive process (cf Lemmer 1998b)

In the analysis of communication, it needs to be remembered that 'the world is multiple worlds; and worlds are created by, and shift within, nets of signs and symbols pointing beyond themselves towards other nets of signs and symbols' (Ward 1996:132-133; italics mine). Thus the phenomenon of communication and its analysis can be

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26 Or any other known experience to which the implied readers may have related where the author would have received the disclosure of mysteries of God. Paul claimed numerous revelations from God, e.g. 2 Cor 12 and Gal 1:11f. Of course here the references are contained in Eph 2:20 and Eph 3:1ff.

27 Choosing to work with the implied entities in no way denies the existence of the historical author or readers, as if these would be fictitious. Even if one were able to have more reliable information about the author and readers, establishing the historical exact entities remains an elusive exercise.

28 It is impossible, not to somehow commit this 'transgression'. At most one can signal an awareness of the fallacy of mirror reading.

29 One could for example reason: 'Ephesians speaks much on the body and head metaphor; thus the problem directly involves this.' But this observation may be fallacious. Body-head could also be employed in a different fashion: the author chooses to weave understanding about head-body into his argument, since he believes this holds the solution to an indirect problem only. We are, of course, not at all sure about this universe. However, the application of body-head direct or indirect, the author decides to write on topic/s which are (symbolically) related to the problem, and to address the issues.
characterised as an interactive process, between all of the various constituents and determinants within a communicative situation. Unfortunately, we only have 'one side' (the text) with us. And it is only by means of scholarly guesswork that we can suggest what the other sides may have involved. What was going on in the minds of the readers? What was the actual problem (the problem beyond the problem)? What is the true intended nature of the symbolic universe that was supposed to have been elicited by what the author writes? What did he envisage; would it be the effect of what he says (and so on)? From this viewpoint, rhetorical analysis does not only involve rhetorical discourse; but all discourse is rhetoric and text—indeed all kinds of texts (e.g., written or oral) are rhetorical (communicative). Furthermore, the analysis of the understanding of rhetoric is the description (deconstruction, if you like) of the entire range of communication; that is the rhetorical dimensions of all discourse, that are involved. In terms of Goodwin's summary (in Makaryk 1993:176–177), I would espouse not to a traditionalist, neither to a transitionalist, but to a contemporary approach, which is a multi-faceted (more than a multi-disciplinary) approach. Furthermore, one would have to take note of any theory or methodology that can explain and evaluate the motivation of a speaker, the response of an audience, the structure of a discourse and the communication environment as such.

As with most writings of the New Testament, a complexity of rhetorical 'situations' is addressed in Ephesians. Any close reading of this letter, warns one that there is not just one situation that is being addressed; for that the entire argument appears to be too complex and diverse, if not diffuse.

The most salient of these situations addressed appear to be, very simply stated as follows: (i) Doubt concerning the status of their identity (cf. Lemmer 1988:116–33): It appears as if some of the readers doubted the status of their identity—whether they were truly members of God's people in the sense of the in-group notions formerly entertained by Israel, as commonwealth of the God of the universe. This caused them to relapse into certain fears of forces in the universe and certain behaviour patterns; (ii) Fear of extraneous (external) forces: Another major exigent situation thus involves the threat by extraneous 'political' forces. It is conceivable, that these two situations (i) and (ii) are indeed related, doubt of identity giving rise to fear of extraneous forces. There may have been two distinct 'sets' of forces involved here; being also somehow related to one another: (a) political authority/ies and (b) spiritual forces.

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30 It may be that there are a number of exigencies that elicited this argument. The letter is actually multifaceted in its address of a variety of problems at the same time.

31 I say 'some', since it may be that the author could be addressing a 'peanut gallery' of readers as well; those who could have given rise to this doubt of identity, and whom the author hoped would also come to know the content of this letter.

32 Typical of 'apocalyptically' oriented thinking, is the belief that behind civil forces there are spiritual entities who dictate the actions by such political and other forces.
It appears that the Jewish Christians\(^3\) in this community could have cast doubt on the true new identity of the Gentile readers. In order to allay the above exigencies, the author narrates two narratives intertwined as one, or more probably, *one narrative* with *two* distinct facets. The essence of the narrative is that the readers may be well-assured that the Gentile readers are in God's ownership, and they are secure in this ownership, as well as that they are in *full participation* of God's benefactions toward them. The distinct facets of the narrative are: (i) God, by primordial decision, and later redemptive actions effected their special belonging to Him, and his people. (ii) By the latter, the readers may be assured that they are secure against extraneous forces, be they spiritual or material (political).

Given the proposition of the exigencies, the following emerges: The author is obviously at pains to re-establish these readers in their conviction of 'belonging to the people of God'. He begins by telling them a story with universal, cosmological, and 'eternal' intent and extent. The readers are a very special denominator. The author initially casts his argument from the very point of view from which the readers may experience their threat, namely the fairly well-established notion that Ephesians 1:1-14, is cast in the mould of the Jewish synagogal berakah. The threat to the identity of the readers as to whether they actually share in the special privileges such as entering God's presence on account of being people of God, could have been from Jewish origin. These were not 'purely' Jewish people, but particularly 'Jewish-Christians'.

\(^3\) I argue that the 'antagonists' could not have been Judaizers, such as those involved in the rhetorical situation of the Letter to the Galatians (cf also Lemmer 1988:121-33). In Ephesians there are only very oblique allusions to 'antagonists/opponents'. They may be inferred from the structure of the argument, but they are never clearly indicated. It appears that the issue/s at stake may have had some Jewish connection, as the tenor of Chapters 1:3-14 and 2:1-23 makes this clear. It is difficult to decide, however, whether there was a particular group—probably *outside* the congregations—who caused the problem, or whether the problem only existed in the minds of the readers. All in all, I do think that the nature of the argument indicates that although the 'antagonists/opponents' may not have been part of the immediate readership, there were those propagating notions that upset their beliefs. This happened along with other pressures on their existence. It appears that the exclusivism argued by the 'opponents' operated more on the level of privilege of *sharing in spiritual experience*, over against their Gentile Christian counterparts. May this not have exactly been a certain 'Gnosticism', a recondite knowledge possessed by the 'opponents' on the basis of a 'brand of Jewish mystic apocalypticism'? This knowledge would have given them the 'cutting edge' in their experiencing of God's presence. The author of Ephesians is at pains to argue the contrary; enumerating the numerous and depth of the *donata* the readers have received *in Christ*.
Here enters a new ‘sub-plot’ or contour in the story: It appears that these ‘Jewish-Christians’ still espoused some forms of early Jewish mysticism,\(^{34}\) which were now not compatible with the Christianity proclaimed by the author. Furthermore, if one incorporates the possible situation from Colossians into this: there were claims of entering God’s very presence as some recondite experience, not to be shared by all; all this firmly on the basis of some of the Jewish mystical traditions embodied in the *kavod*, *merkavah* and *hekhalot* (cf §2.5, below). The implications of this belief or claim, would have created the notion that ‘more than one body’ of Christ would be possible; those from Judaistic background, and those from Gentile background. The author is now at pains not only to explain the true nature of the body of Christ and the privileges accorded by belonging to that body; but he is especially also straining to affirm that the readers of Ephesians belong to that one and true body. They do not have to doubt their status as God’s people; moreover they do share in the most intimate of mystical experiences; through Christ and the Spirit they have entrance into God’s presence: ὅτι δὲ αὐτοῦ ἐξομεν τὴν προσαγωγὴν οἱ ἀμφότεροι ἐν ἐνὶ πνεύματι πρὸς τὸν πατέρα.

The author establishes that the readers’ status of their identity as people of the presence of God is beyond cavil; they were after all chosen even before the foundations of the world—their ‘election’ (and of that entity, the body of Christ) is secured even before God chose Israel; but there is more. They have now been sealed to receive the inheritance of God. Moreover, they are incorporated in God’s all-time work of bringing everything together in His Messiah (1:10f). Thus they are incorporated in the Messiah’s entire redemptive work, even into the highest heavens (1:19–23). They now belong to a certain special entity, the ‘body of Christ’.

Ephesians 2 clearly narrates the story of their former ignominy (2:11ff) as outcasts, but this has now finally been put right. They actually belong to what was formerly holy ground to Israel only, namely the *temple*,\(^{35}\) and they can actually denominate God (the God formerly only of Israel): ‘Father’ (2:18ff). But the story continues, this new inclusion has formerly been a ‘mystery’, but it has now been revealed that long ago God intended them to be part of His plan. Moreover, this affords these readers access to God Himself (3:11f), a rare and special privilege indeed. The author proceeds to affirm

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\(^{34}\) In the words of Scott (1997:102 n 4), which appears to have been taken over from Gruenwald: ‘The term “mysticism” is used here not in the pejorative sense of superstitious self-delusion, but rather in the sense of the diverse forms of *direct realizations of divine presence*, whether on earth or in heaven’ (italics—HRL).

\(^{35}\) I am of the opinion that ‘temple’ is no longer the Temple in Jerusalem. Cf 3.2.2(b), below.
this knowledge for the readers in his plea to the Father that they may fully understand this.

This privilege necessitates certain demands, such as walking worthily (4:1ff) of their status. Furthermore, they should take care not to be swayed from this belief (13ff), by any threat, be it fear for the spirit world, or political forces.36

2.4 Rejection of an 'anti-mystical' understanding of 'body of Christ' in Ephesians

This involves two issues: the matter of early-Catholicism,37 firstly, and secondly, a general positivistic canon applied to religious phenomena.

'Early Catholicism' involves a two-sided reference. From Roman Catholic side, it designates the early origins38 of this branch of Christianity, before it was used by Lutherans and some other branches of Protestantism when it became pejorative. Since it was recognised that Ephesians may actually authenticate Roman Catholicism, it became a 'deutero-Pauline' letter. As the 'mystical' nature of the church (church as mystery/ 'sacrament') as believed in by Roman Catholicism, could possibly have been validated by Ephesians, the latter did not receive the same standing. Moreover, the 'mystical' notion of the church was rejected, since it was 'Catholic'.

The rejection of the 'mystical body of Christ' rests on infinitely more deep seated philosophical presuppositions than only the ecclesiastical polity in a Lutheran-Roman Catholic debate. I refer to the innate rationalistic principle (or 'ground motive/s') of what is currently called the 'Modernist Project'.39

36 Obviously the rest of the so-called paraenetic section would yield further 'information' on this underlying story—how they may even have been fighting in the arena, if one accepts Moritz's (1996) exposition on 6:20ff. However, for now the above contours have to suffice.
37 What is offered below, is too brief to decide on the early Catholicism hypothesis; see the more extensive treatment in Lemmer 1988:53–110, 'Particularisation and evaluation of the early Catholicism hypothesis as a main determinat in existing Ephesian research' dealing with research until 1988. Cf especially (57ff) concerning the discussion centered around the matter of ecclesial polity, in which Lutheranism (and other strands such as Pietism) had to legitimise their existence over against Catholicism.
38 They are in the tradition of the earliest manifestation of Christianity, hence the fact that the so-called 'early-Catholic letters', Ephesians, among others, is the bridge between the very early forms of Christianity and Roman Catholicism. Ephesians would then contain Roman Catholic notions such as the universality of the church, and the idea of a Heilanstalt to which everyone has to belong for salvation, outside the pail of which there is no salvation.
39 Obviously, this 'project' brought us much and we are innate products of this 'project', which largely divided history into the 'pre-critical' and the 'critical' phases. I do not want to debate all the merits and demerits, others have done so more ably. A
It is especially regarding the nature of epistemology, literature and respect for the convictions of 'the other' that postmodernism sensitises us.

Excursus: A postmodern view of religious phenomena (cf Lemmer 1998b)

I refer again to an observation by Ward (1996:132ff, quoting Bauman) referred to above: 'Postmodernity...brings “re-enchantment” of the world after the protracted and earnest, though in the end inconclusive, modern struggle to dis-enchant it.'\(^{40}\) It is the re-evaluation of ambivalence, mystery, excess and aporia as they are adhered to, are constituted by, and disrupt the rational, that lies behind the re-enchantment of the world. Reality is no longer tabulated and evaluated in terms of empirical fact only. To characterise by way of negation, Ward points out that the philosophy of religion, will not be so phallocentric or ethnocentric, nor tied to Enlightenment texts (Descartes, Hume, Kant) and to Enlightenment procedures: the law of non-contradiction; the logic of subject to predicate, and then the law of causality. This is important, given that rationalities are local, specific and embedded within cultures and language. This brings about a broadening of the possibilities of ‘knowing and understanding’.

Espousing to this viewpoint neither proves nor disproves anything, but opens one up, and sensitises to other possibilities of understanding such as the formerly despised phenomena of the ‘mysterious’ and the ‘mystical’. It frees one from the vaunted viewpoint that that which appears to be hidden, must always have a rational explanation. Thus it elicits respect for that understanding of the world (symbolic universe) of those living in antiquity. This respect brings about a new orientation to the authors and readers of literature in antiquity. In the case of Ephesians, it opens one up to accept any possible 'mystical' background that could explain the rhetorical situation of the letter. And not to reject the letter, since it may perchance authenticate a rival movement in Christianity, or advocate acceptance of 'recondite' knowledge.

2.5 Jewish mysticism:\(^{41}\) an essential religio-historical element

As pointed out in the 'narrative' construction, the author is possibly affirm-
ing the denial by others of the readers’ experience of the divine presence.\textsuperscript{42} The basis for this affirmation is founded upon their belonging to, Christ and the sharing in his benefits, and this sharing may also be designated as ‘mysteriously and thus mystically’ so, by being the ‘body’ of the ‘Head’.

Before enumerating some reasons to substantiate this proposition, it is necessary to orientate oneself by what could be meant by early Jewish mysticism.\textsuperscript{43}

\subsection*{2.5.1 Brief orientation on early Jewish mysticism}

Mysticism is here understood in the sense of a belief in, or experience of a reality surpassing normal human understanding or experience; this reality is perceived as essential to the nature of life. In a more specific/narrow sense it can refer to a system of contemplative prayer and spirituality which is aimed at achieving direct intuitive experience of the divine.\textsuperscript{44}

The general characteristic of Jewish mysticism is indeed that of a culminating experience, in which the mystic would prepare him/herself by various rituals and abstentions to become worthy to be allowed into the immediate presence of God. Kabbalism assumed two forms, each of these determined by its object of contemplation: the divine chariot in the visions of Ezekiel 1:1–28 contains the principal symbol for the merkavah (or chariot) mysticism. Beneath the chariot were the faces of the beings, and it was surrounded by the cherubim and angelic hosts, which in itself was a privilege to behold. Adjoining this there were the hekhalot (palaces), which became the focus of attention by the mystic as he passed through the various of the seven heavens. Hekhalot was a slightly later (how much later is uncertain) tradition which developed the notion of the seven throne rooms (or palaces) of God, the third being equal to paradise. In this regard Isaiah 6 is of importance, where the notion of תְּלֵה is used (hence hekhalot). From this notion we also find the development of the hekhalot visionary tradition; a synthesis of several traditions which are reflected in a number of texts. These traditions were aimed at the achievement of ecstatic trance experiences. According to

\textsuperscript{42} This may be one of the very datums that some Jewish-Christians (or whoever) wanted to deny believers from a Gentile background.

\textsuperscript{43} For this I draw from an earlier treatment (Lemmer 1996). Others (cf Draper 1997:266, and Roberts 1998:207) seem to be of the opinion that it has merit.

\textsuperscript{44} There is obviously also the more pejorative sense of the obscure, or ‘confused’ belief or thought, or in a ‘gnostic’ sense of recondite knowledge. In this case it refers to that which is inexplicable, contingent to the notion of the ‘mysterious’.
Rowland (1992:226) such traditions were probably very old. Thus merkavah and hekhalot were symbols for the same mysticism. The other major focus was the unmediated light of the first day of creation (Gn 1:1-5) which resulted in bereshit or creation mysticism. The very notion of ma'aseh merkavah (the story of the chariot) indicates a systematisation of traditions within the context of rabbinic Judaism (and extra-rabbinic groups). It appears as if one can demarcate four periods of development of Jewish mysticism: in ancient Judaism; during the 'rabbinic' (i.e. Mishnaic/Talmudic eras); during medieval times, and then of course in modern Judaism. Obviously the mysticism in focus, related to the formation of New Testament writings, is primarily concerned with that in ancient times; and to some extent also during the Talmudic era, since this is not a phenomenon which has developed overnight.

Van Uchelen (1983:12-22) provides a précis of the situation which predisposed the development of Jewish mysticism; not the origins, since its roots stretch back much further. These developments also characterise the mysticism which precipitated these developments. Israel's, as is well-known, was a religion of the Temple; the latter being the centre of her religion. The 'earthly seat' of Jahweh was in the earthly sanctuary. This sanctuary was a visible sign of the presence of God in Israel's midst. During the various historical developments, especially after the second Temple era, (the Temple having been destroyed), there came a shift of emphasis in which the focus was now among others on the study of texts, rather than on sacrifice, or focus on a visible building. The basic foundations of Jewish society were now removed. From now on there would be reference to the era before the

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45 Cf Schweid (1985) who suggests these four eras of development. This volume is a 'critique' of the seminal works on Jewish mysticism (and Judaism in general) by Gershon Scholem.
46 During the era of late antiquity one can presuppose a sharper dualistic view than before. Cosmology at this time was understood to pose a sharper distinction between the heavenly and the earthly worlds (cf Aune 1993:32). This in itself was conducive to some of the notions and motifs that would be found in mystical thinking and practices; how does one cross the divide to come into contact with God?
47 For the specific inquiry into the way in which early Jewish mysticism related to apocalypticism, cf Lemmer (1996:367-374), a section entitled 'Apocalyptic mysticism or mystic apocalypticism?'
48 Van Uchelen (1983:12-18) refers to the course of history during which the temple worship was respectively affected by the Babylonians, the Persians, the Syrians and of course finally by the Romans in 70 CE. Once again the temple treasures were carried off. From now on the temple tax had to be paid to Rome and was then designated as the sanctuary of Jupiter Capitolinus.
49 Cf the presentation by Rowland (1992) in which he strongly, and I may add, convincingly argues for evidence of a mystical tradition in rabbinic Judaism.
destruction and the era after the destruction (as is referred to in t.Taanit 3.6). It was now that the Pharisees gained a greater influence, fulfilling a teaching role in the so-called ‘Oral Torah’. The shekinah was now present in the bet ha-torah/ha-midrash. It is especially at this time that Johanan ben Zakkai became a leading figure. In their contemplation of the why of history they arrived at a different view of The Holy One. It is also now, that by means of midrash the focus was turned on the heavenly temple, rather than the earthly. It is for example cited from Genesis Rabba 1,1 that the Torah and the Throne of Glory was created at the same time. However, it was at that time that the notion of journeying to the throne of God, in order to disclose heavenly secrets, was already encountered in apocalyptic writings. Both the apocalypticist and the mystic traditions which found an accelerated development at this time, found their salvation in esoteric traditions.

In discussions of the scriptural roots of the mystical movement/s reference, in particular to merkavah mysticism (this most distinguishable early mystical movement) is usually made to: Ezekiel 1, 8, 10 (48:8 in LXX); Isaiah 6:1-8. However, reference is also made to other passages where the chariot or the throne or when the form of God appears: 1 Chronicles 28:18; 1 Kings 22:19; Psalm 18:11; Daniel 7:7-10, and others with a kind of apocalyptic narrative. And then also to Genesis 1 (esp on creation with reference to ha'amaseh bereshit) and Song of Songs (with reference to shi'ur qomāh. The dimensions/stature of God’s body filling the universe). Obviously the key passages are those from Ezekiel, especially Ezekiel 1—the so-called ‘throne chariot (or merkavah) passage.’ Shi'ur qomāh is again related to the seven celestial halls or palaces, since it is here that the ‘body of God’ can be seen.

Although much investigation still needs to be done, there have been attempts to find the ‘mystical interface in development’ between these passages and a more fully fledged (between 300–600 CE) Jewish mysticism. It is obvious that this earlier phase which is the most difficult to construe, is nevertheless the phase that is most relevant for New Testament studies.

Since Ephesians contains what would sometimes be identified as ‘apocalyptic’ notions, it is important to briefly point out the relationship of

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50 From יִשְׂרָאֵל which entails a searching, a studying and an application of the Scriptures.
51 This passage speaking about the cherubim covering the ark, also refers to the golden chariot.
53 Cf the element of ‘determinism’ in 1:3–12; or elements of ‘other-worldliness’, such...
apocalypticism and early Jewish mysticism (cf. Lemmer 1996:367–371; and particularly:371): ‘Apocalyptic always contained mystical dimensions. However, its focus was different due to the distinctive religious needs it was addressing such as insecurity and a deprivation of particular religious identity, due to political and other upheavals.’^54 Whereas, ‘[m]ysticism developed to satisfy a different religious quest...namely the necessity for a more a-material religious expression and deprivation of temple worship.’

2.5.1 The body and early Jewish mysticism

It is imperative to comment further on one strand of early Jewish mysticism, namely the shi’ur qômâh (=stature/dimensions of the body),^55 since it is of particular relevance for the body of Christ concept in Ephesians. The shi’ur qômâh, like the rest of the main strands of Jewish mysticism, also centered around a man-like figure, who sat upon a celestial throne (Fossum 1983:260). Fossum (1983:260f) refers to a book by Elchasai, a Jewish-Christian sect leader (ca 101 CE) quoted by Hippolytus. In a passage from this book it re-

as is found in 1:20ff; 2.1ff, and reference to ‘celestial beings’ and ‘celestial world’ in 1:20ff and 6:10ff. By this I am not advocating that Ephesians is an apocalyptic writing as such.

^54 This is a very interesting statement, given the issue of lack of, or deteriorating identity of the Ephesians readers; this also in the face of possible political pressure, Moritz’s (1996) thesis.

^55 I should admit that although I firmly believe that shi’ur qômâh strands of early Jewish mysticism is somehow related to a number of New Testament traditions, e.g. Gospel of John, the Book of Revelation, some Pauline traditions (on the body of Christ), what follows in this essay is not based on extensive investigation of primary sources. For an ‘initial testing’, reference is only made in a general way, to a number of shi’ur qômâh related concepts—thus it is a kind of ‘pilot study’. As in the case of the dating of many Jewish sources, there is also uncertainty about the collection of writings under the name Shiur Qomah. It is here maintained (with, e.g., Fossum 1983:261) that although the formalisation of the work came about after 300 CE, the roots of Jewish mysticism date back much further. He refers (:261) to Scholem: In support of the protestation of the high age of the Shiur Qomah speculation, Scholem also cites the Jewish-Christian doctrine of the Pseudo-Clementine Homilies that God has a beautiful bodily form (soma and morphē) with all the limbs of a body [cf. his note 9]. Before Scholem, M. Gaster had seen that the description of the divine “Body of Truth” (soma tes aletheias) given by the Gnostic Marcus in the 2nd century apparently derives from Jewish Shiur Qomah traditions [cf note 10]. Finally, Scholem has discovered “a clear reference” to the Shiur Qomah doctrine in a passage from the short version of 2 (the Slavonic) Book of Enoch, which in all probability is pre-Christian [note 11]. The treatment by Fossum 1983 ‘Jewish-Christian Christology and Jewish Mysticism’, which although as the title indicates, concentrates on Christology, discusses information very useful for the present essay. What follows is largely a summary of his article, unless otherwise indicated.
In one of the numerous descriptions in shi’ur qômêh teaching where
reference is made to a body of gargantuan proportions (260-261). Fossum
continues, ‘[t]his representation of the enormous angel of the Son has been
pared to the description of God in his appearance upon the throne of the
rkabah found in the Si’ur Qômêh, “the Measurement of the Body”, i.e., the
dy of the Kabod, the man-like manifestation of God.’ He (260-261) quotes
in one of a number of the writings (or fragments) of the Shi’ur Qômêh
mely from Sefer Raziel). This contains the typical vision of the King of
s sitting upon his celestial throne. Then Metatron, the prince of the
ence, informs Rabbi Ishmael that he is going to disclose the measure­
ts of the Holy One. The soles of His feet are all the worlds, and then fol­
s all the dimensions. Similarly, ‘Enoch (the prototype of mystics who as­
ed into heaven and beheld the man-like figure upon the throne) says: “I
seen the measure of the height of the Lord, without dimension and
without shape, which has no end” (261). But in spite of the immeasurable
ensions, the paradox of this mysticism is that the visionary can neverthe­
behold the divine Body in ecstasy.
In quoting Scholem, Fossum (262) remarks on the nature of the body of
that the divine Body in Jewish mysticism is not that of the essential
dhead: ‘The theory does not imply that God in Himself possesses a physi­
form, but only that a form of this kind may be ascribed to “the Glory”,
ic in some passages is called guf ha-Shekhinah (“the body of the Divine
ence”).’ It appears that (263) the Elchasites (sect of Jewish Christians)
d Christ as the kavod and heavenly ‘Makranthropos’. This Son of
n of the Father is called God’s morphe, soma and ho, which could refer to
d’s opsis, eidea and morphe as well as prosopon. Thus the Son is the Glory
so on (reminiscent of references in Colossians and Hebrews as well). This
to suffice for now, except to point out that many assume that this was the
d of belief system in early Jewish mysticism that was prevalent at the
es of the formation of the New Testament. The question which arises is:
w does this relate to the understanding of body of Christ in Ephesians?
I suggest that Paul’s Damascus Road experience (or subsequent visions),
a revelation of the celestial (risen) Christ as the visible manifestation of
invisible God, and of Christ’s body. The ‘body’ that he saw was the
agation of the Christ (which was its Head) onto the earth; thus a
MKROANTHROPOS’ vision. This body is made up of all the believers in the
ist. According to Ephesians (but slightly different in Colossians), what
seen by Paul is the mystery that was hidden for ages.56 This body is the

The content of the ‘mystery’ (cf note 77, below) varies in the different writings
er Paul’s name: Sometimes it could be interpreted as a facet of redemption; it could
ead as the Christ himself (so especially Col); then of course the ekklesia, and also
church comprising Jew and Gentile, but more than that, this Body is based on the analogy of the 'mystical' Body of the resurrected Christ, which is at once of a material and a spiritual nature. This is a celestial entity which resides in heaven as much as it does on earth. This belief is chiefly rooted in the incipient if not already developing belief at that time, of the *shīr qōmah*.

There are also a number of elements which were of specific significance in early Jewish mysticism, that may have played a role in the Ephesian conceptual universe, such as the *kavod* (or glory), the divine proximity and dwelling in the *merkavah, bekhalot*, the *Spirit*, and the *heavenly temple* (over against the earthly Temple as believed in in mystic circles). Of particular significance to Ephesians, is '*musterion' (1:9; 3:3, 4, 9; 5:32, 6:19). Musterion also endorses the possible link between *mystery* and 'mysticism' in Ephesians, and the nature of *of the body* [of Christ] in Ephesians contains a 'mystical' dimension. Other implications of this view is that the exalted Christ shares his glory (*kavod*: in this case the splendour of his existence) with his body, and this happens by the Spirit.57 Moreover, the very datum of being part of this body is to already share in the *mystery of God*; and thus to share in the mystical. This view of the body also has an effect on the *eschatology* contained in Ephesians. However, this is not the dualism between realised and futurist eschatology, which is a 'positivist creation'; rather it is an eschatology which can exist in more than one dimension at the same time.58

A valid question would obviously be whether such *Jewish mystical strands* could have somehow have been part of the provenance of the Letter to the Ephesians. There are a number of reasons which substantiate a strong possibility for such Jewish mystical notions being present in the Western Asia Minor area, and for the readership also being *au fait* with these.

The fairly recent study by Moritz (1996), *A profound mystery: the use of the Old Testament in Ephesians*, points a way forward for this investigation, also for a decision on the matrix of the conceptual framework.59 He argues (at the

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57 Although I did not know about this possible Jewish mystical background when I wrote my thesis, I did pay extensive attention to the role of the Spirit (Lemmer 1988).

58 I pointed out elsewhere (1988:481-487) that there does not appear to be any tension in the mind of the author regarding realised and futurist eschatology.

59 Admittedly, Moritz does not primarily deal with the problem of authorship. However, his investigation on the nature of the use of the Old Testament in Ephesians, confirms an earlier decision by myself (cf Lemmer 1988:53-110; esp 109), regarding the nature of the underlying conceptual framework of this letter. He touches on the matter of authorship (:219f), when he discusses Ephesians' relationship to Colossians; see also my partly corresponding decision on this (Lemmer 1988:26-30).
end of his investigation on the influence of Scriptural traditions from the Old Testament) that the ‘...most predominant and deliberate source of influence on Ephesians, [is] the Jewish Bible.’

He further (216f) argues that a ‘...significant portion of the recipients had sufficient knowledge of these Scriptures to appreciate the thrust of the quotations and allusions employed.’ Building on Arnold’s (1989) work, Moritz postulates that ‘[a]strology appears to have played a significant part not only in the environment of Israel’s captivity, but equally in the religious climate of first century Western Asia Minor.

The datum of extensive Jewish influence (and thus traditions) in Western Asia Minor at the time, is now beyond cavil. It is merely the extent and the precise content and nature that may be uncertain. Besides extensive references to Old Testament passages (e.g. Ps 110) which played a crucial role in the early Christian movement; numerous allusions to Old Testament writings, and there are references to rabbinical interpretations (e.g. Ps 68). Telling in this respect, is the (extensive) berachotic cast (from the ancient synagogue worship) of the first chapters of Ephesians. More interesting (and more difficult to explain) is the very possible convergence with Qumranic thinking in Ephesians.

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60 He does not hereby deny the possibility to study the influence of Qumran or even Gnosticism in the formation of Ephesians. But he does point out that it is ‘regrettable’ that the Jewish Bible has been underplayed (214). He affirms, ‘[t]o call the use of Israel’s Scriptures in Ephesians “incidental” (Lindemann) is at best to ignore the obvious.’ I think one can go further and say it is ludicrous; especially when one takes cognisance of Barth 1984 and numerous other publications. Of note is that many of the Old Testament occurrences are in rhetorically strategic places.

61 There is much that is plausible in the work of Arnold, especially since he can cite numerous materials which support this situation in Asia Minor at the time. I do think, however, that this fear of the readers, and the consequent admonition to not succumb, cannot be the only raison d’etat for Ephesians. Arnold does refer to some connection with mysticism (cf Moritz 1996:218); but he does not give this much prominence.

62 Cf Lemmer 1993, in which the main focus was on the city of Ephesus, yet geographical proximity necessitated reference to cities on the west coast of Asia Minor and in some instances to the wider parameter of Asia Minor. Ephesus is, undeniably, a very important centre in early Christianity, and an understanding of the said relationship can only enhance our understanding of a number of NT documents. See also the observations by Trebilco (1991:1) in this regard and Lemmer 1993, section 3.3.2, ‘The nature and identity of Judaism in Asia Minor, Western Asia Minor, and in Ephesus’.

63 The berachotic cast needs no longer be proven, since it is widely accepted (e.g. Lincoln 1989; Best 1998): by the very nature of things this can only underscore the Jewish nature permeating this communication.

64 I refer to the essays in Paul and the Dead Sea Scrolls, Murphy-O’Connor (1968, but republished in 1990): ‘The Epistle to the Ephesians in the light of the Qumran texts’ (Kuhn) and ‘Contributions made by Qumran to the understanding of the Epistle to the Ephesians’ (Mussner). This convergence is either indicative of more universal religious proclivities at the time; but more probably indicates the influence of strands of
2.6 Reasons for Jewish mystical-apocalyptic notions in the Western Asia Minor area

The following reasons offer themselves for this possibility:

- **The possibility of Qumranic influences in Western Asia Minor:** The influences of Judaism has been sufficiently indicated (cf Lemmer 1993; Trebilco 1991). Even though it cannot be proven, it seems a firm proposition that the particular strands which were contained in Qumranic circles, were well-represented in Western Asia Minor.65 There are obviously numerous possibilities by means of which Qumranic influences could have reached Western Asia Minor, not least by the strong Jewish presence and missions, of which one was the 'Christian mission', as embodied in the Apostle Paul (cf, among others, Scott 1997).

- **A corollary of Qumranic influences in Western Asia Minor, includes the possibility of mystic and apocalyptic traditions forming part of the provenance of Ephesians:** Of direct importance for now is the possibility that the notions of the 'heavenly worship', the 'mystery' and various facets of early Jewish mysticism such as *šī‘ur qomāh* were known to both the author as well as the readers.

- **Ephesians contains language and terminology redolent of Jewish mysticism and apocalyptic:** There is a clear link between *mystery* and *soma* in Ephesians (cf §3 below). There are also more than frequent references to the 'principalities and powers' and other heavenly realities in various contexts in Ephesians (1:20f; 2:1f; 3:3f; 6:10f). Cognate to this is also the strong notion of pre-determination, redolent of apocalyptic thinking, which is found in chapter 1 and 2:10.

- **Recent studies in Colossians have argued strongly for possible connections with Jewish mysticism:** It has, among others, been averred that the opponents who gave rise to the Colossian counter 'theology/philosophy', were steeped in Jewish mystical traditions. Of relevance here is the fact that both the author and the readers were sufficiently well-versed in this mindset,66 to understand an argument with many echoes from Jewish apocalyptic as well as mysticism. Given my own thesis, that Ephesians addresses a different but related prob-

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65 Many indications could be cited. I refer only to the Qumranic 'echoes' in Jn (cf e.g Draper 1997) and in Rv—both of probable Western Asia Minor provenance. There are also strong arguments for Ephesus as provenance for Jn (cf Du Rand 1991).

66 And may be even knowing writings which contained these strands of thinking (cf Roberts 1998:201ff).
to that of Colossians, underscores the possibility of a Jewish mystic-apocalyptic mindset of a sorts.

- Paul as author or progenitor\textsuperscript{67} of the Ephesian traditions\textsuperscript{68} had mystical experiences.\textsuperscript{69} Scott (1997:106ff) provides a useful survey of the debate in which it was argued whether Paul in fact did experience, and was acquainted with, such throne-chariot visions. He refers to the pioneering work by Gershom Scholem, later objected to by Schäfer, who was then conclusively rebutted by Morray-Jones. Scott concludes that such experiences were indeed possible, as referred to in 2 Corinthians 12:2-4.\textsuperscript{70} He infers, that as far as the apostle's own experience is concerned, he is a mediator of such experiences to his readers, at least in 2 Corinthians.

2.7 Conclusion

The reasons mentioned above constitute a cogent argument for the Western Asia Minor (and thus Ephesian) situation to be linked to both Qumran, merkavah mysticism and to Pauline thinking on the matter.

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\textsuperscript{67} Once again, if Paul was not the actual author of Ephesians, he, like all progenitors of traditions, would have been taken seriously. But even if the 'school' or 'disciple' who would have produced this letter (and Colossians) would have deviated somewhat in their application of Pauline teachings, it does not rule out that they moved within an ambit in which this kind of thinking played a role.

\textsuperscript{68} In this, Paul would have played a multiple role. He (along with his co-workers) disseminated the gospel in these regions. Whether he wrote Colossians and Ephesians, or whether some Pauline 'disciple/school' did, these writings would have, to a large extent, conveyed Pauline convictions. If it was a 'school/disciple', they would, out of sheer admiration and respect, have perpetuated Pauline beliefs. Not least the beliefs and persuasions of Paul obtained by means of divine revelation (3:11), which could be characterised as his own 'merkavah experience/s' (because he had more than just the Damascus Road experience) (cf Heininger 1996). Probably during the Damascus Road experience or later when Paul entered the bekhalot (2 Cor 12), he saw not only the risen Christ, but also the 'body of Christ' redolent of, or related to, the belief (or incipient belief) of the sh'\textsuperscript{1} ur q\textsuperscript{6} m\textsuperscript{1} ah: the body of God which fills and permeates the universe.

\textsuperscript{69} Cf Scott (1997). He argues for a number, if not numerous such experiences by Paul. In this, he also establishes the probability of assimilation of Qumranic traditions in Pauline thinking. I admit that this needs to be tested further, but for the sake of the present argument, the probability of connections between Qumran and merkavah mysticism, and between Paul and Qumran has been adequately established. See also Heininger (1996), who also argues in the affirmative regarding Paul's experiences.

\textsuperscript{70} Scott (:107ff) cites a host of primary materials which could render this viewpoint possible. In this he also refers to the important merkavah passage of Ps 110. This is also the passage discussed at length by Moritz (1996:9-22) in connection with Ephesians 1:20-23. The latter, however, does not register any merkavah connections, since he wants to establish a more direct link with an OT Vorlage, rather than later Wirkungsgeschichten, such as merkavah.
Certain Jewish mystical elements will be referred to in the discussion of particular Ephesian passages below, as they relate to the body (-head) concept, and the way in which they may have played a role in the argument.

3 DISCUSSION OF A NUMBER OF 'BODY PASSAGES' IN EPHESIANS

3.1 Orientation

The textual cohesion of Ephesians clearly indicates that the body-collocations imbues much of the thinking of the author, which inevitably reflects in the coherence of the argument. Overall inter-connection of body with other concepts,71 signals its important role within the argument presented.72 The entire discourse serves to 'convince' and 'instruct' the readers about their incorporation and participation in God’s blessings for them, as is undeniably provided in union with Christ. The passe-partout to internalise this cognitively, is to come to an understanding of the reality and nature of the body of Christ. By belonging to this they have access into the very (merkavah) presence of God. A privilege, which was doubted by the readers,73 indeed belonged to them.

Since a discourse analysis by itself can result in a one sided analysis,74 and since communication is always an interactive process which stems from and results in networks of understanding, in the analyses of an argument should lay bare the possible networks underlying a text, if at all possible. A possible cognitive network in this case, is of course the early Jewish mystic symbolic universe in some adapted form. Therefore the ensuing reading of certain passages may be termed a ‘mysticism reading’ 75 of the body passages in Ephesians.76

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71 This is valid both on the level of immediate constituents, as well as on a macro argument (discourse) level.
72 Again the caveat, this does not mean that understanding the ‘body’ as such was necessarily under siege, as would be implied in ‘mirror reading’, but that the author avails himself of this ‘symbolic universe’ to argue his case.
73 Once again, one could argue that there were no opponents/antagonists as such, but that there was an exigence with the readers which involved a doubting of the status of their identity.
74 For detailed discussion and portrayal of the discourse flow see Lemmer 1988. Only the more immediate contexts of soma is presented, in order to facilitate the discussion. The numbering system is as follows (taking Eph 1:20, below, as example): 20(=verse) 11(=colon) (a)(=comma) ἐν ἐνθρόνοις ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ. The colon and comma numbering is taken over from the work done in 1988.
75 This is not intended to be akin to all the respective readings that are currently in vogue, such as materialistic, liberationist, feminist, ecological and the like. I maintain that this text itself echoes this religious background, via its Jewish roots.
76 Focus will be on most of the the overt 'body passages', and one or two cognate
3.2 Soma in Ephesians

3.2.1 Ephesians 1:20-23

The full range of this pericope (III) is clearly 1:15-23, which deals with intercession for the Spirit’s cognitional enabling that the readers may understand their inheritance. One should take notice (cf Lemmer 1988:253-254) of the way in which this section relates to the preceding pericope (II, 1:3-14) as well as the ensuing pericopes (pericopes IV-IX, 2:1-3:21). Prior to reading 1:20-23, it is imperative that one should indicate the broad contours from Ephesians 1:8-10.

9 5 (b) γνωρίσας ἡμῖν τὸ μυστήριον τοῦ θελήματος αὐτοῦ, κατὰ τὴν εὐθοδίαν αὐτοῦ

6 (a) ἦν προεβετο
   (i) ἐν αὐτῷ

10 (ii) εἰς οἰκονομίαν τοῦ πληρώματος τῶν καιρῶν,
   (b) ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι τὰ πάντα ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ,
   (i) τὰ ἐπὶ τῶν οὐρανῶν
   (ii) καὶ τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς ἐν αὐτῷ,

11 7 (a) ἐν ὧν καὶ ἐκληρώθημεν

From the argument, it is clear that the content of μυστήριον,77 is initially contained in the ‘enigmatic’ ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι,78 which clearly implies more than the mere act of reconciliation. It implies the bringing together of two spheres: heaven and earth. More relevant to the readers is that all things are brought together under one Head. This contains the ensuing (v 11f) existential benefit as indirectly explained further on, concerning a certain qualified ‘inheritance’. Their own obtaining a share in this inheritance is climactically described in 1:11-14 (Lemmer 1988:135-136).79 And so, it is by their incorporation in Him, by participation through the promised Holy passages only. What follows is suggestive, in order to test the viability of the thesis.

77 Besides particular religious overtones, probably drawing from Jewish apocalypticism and mysticism, μυστήριον clearly fulfills a rhetorical role in Ephesians. It is always used to introduce some salient information. Thus it is also strategically placed within the setup of the letter.

78 One of numerous concepts in Ephesians which defy clear understanding. Unless one is able to establish the exact networks (such as the symbolic universe) underlying the argument, understanding these concepts will always remain allusive.

79 I argue (Lemmer 1988:192 n 3, and 205ff) that the climax does not reside in ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι (1:10), as is so often thought (cf e.g Caragounis 1977:49-50; 60-62). Although God’s act contained in ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι, may be a great datum in philosophical/theological (cosmic) terms, what is of interest to the readers, is the way in which the author concretises this act of God (v 10) in terms of their own existential need; thus the argument is ultimately ‘reader-driven’.
Spirit, that the readers have already come to share in the unity with the one Head, and this being part of this Head, is the ‘mystery’ (9 5(b), above). The readers actually share in the mystery, which has been disclosed. Thus they need not be threatened by claims to a recondite knowledge which allows only some into the presence of God, as a special privilege. The way in which readers have obtained this participation in the mystery, is repeatedly described by means of the ἐν Χριστῷ. 80

The author recapitulates this line of thinking about the inheritance in 1:15-18. What follows in verses 19-23, is yet a further explanation of how God made their inheritance a reality, and what the nature of that reality is.

20 11 (a) ἥν ἐνήργησεν ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ
(b) ἐγείρας αὐτὸν ἐκ νεκρῶν,
(c) καὶ καθίσας
   (i) ἐν δεξίῳ αὐτοῦ
   (ii) ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις
21 (iii) ὑπεράνω πάσης ἀρχῆς καὶ ἐξουσίας καὶ δυνάμεως καὶ
       κυριότητος
   (d) καὶ ποιήσας ὄνοματος ὄνομαξομένου ὡς μόνον
   (e) ἐν τῷ αἰῶνι τοῦτω ἄλλα καὶ ἐν τῷ μέλλοντι
22 12 καὶ πάντα ὑπέταξεν ὑπὸ τούς πάντας αὐτοῦ,
23 14 (a) ἦτας ἐστὶν τὸ σῶμα αὐτοῦ, τὸ πλήρωμα τοῦ
       (b) τὰ πάντα ἐν πᾶσιν πληρουμένου.

The readers should know two things about their inheritance: (a) Christ has the ultimate privileged (and powerful) position, since God raised him to this, and (b) at the same time, He is also the ‘Head’ of the believers, the church, who by their union with him—a mystical union at that—obviously shares in the same privilege (and power).

Taking one’s cue from 20 11(c)(i) above, it is clear that Christ occupies the most privileged position ἐν δεξίῳ αὐτοῦ. He is in closest proximity to God, and is even raised above all. 81 Thus by the church’s union with Christ, she is

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80 This collocation has not been uninvestigated, and as usual, depending on the angle one takes, it is explained to be void of any mystical connotations. However, Du Toit (1998) signals (hac some qualified form of mysticism could be assumed by the use of this expression.

81 The author evidently means to sweep across the entire spectrum, including heavenly beings, friendly and hostile. This reference may be in order to comfort the readers that they are free and freed from any spiritual/occultic forces and their influences (Arnold 1989); thus they can be liberated from superstition. Or this may be explained by the proposition of Moritz (1996), that the readers need not fear the forces behind the civil authorities, who are casting them into the arena in Ephesus. I want to aver that this reference is an affirmation of the status of the readers and a denial that they have to participate in (e.g. mekavah) rituals in order to experience closeness to
also close to God—even above all the angels which could occupy the way to God, as is believed by those engaging in merkavah practices in order to have access into the presence of God. Christ is exalted above these beings; the believers share in this inheritance. Of significance is again the somewhat ‘enigmatic’ εν τοις ἐπιστρατεύοις (cf 1:3, 2:6, 3:10, 6:12). This reference (v 20) is obviously meant to remind of the ‘opening’ sentence of the berachothic prayer in 1:3. The ensuing argument indicates that by means of their union with Christ, they are already sharing the ‘heavenly places’ (redolent of the gethalot’s palaces).

The kind of momentous statement found in 22-23: καὶ εὐτῶν ἐδωκεν κεφαλὴν ὑπὲρ πάντα τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ, 23 ἦτις ἐστιν τὸ σῶμα αὐτοῦ, τὸ πλήρωμα τοῦ τὰ πάντα ἐν πᾶσιν πληρομένου, is intended to be astounding. God gave Christ as the Head (over all things) to the church. Not only is he positioned above all things, but regarding the church, he is ‘merely’ the Head of which she is the body. And it is his feet which are ‘part of his body’ (the church) which have all things beneath it (22 καὶ πάντα ὑπέταξεν ὑπὸ τοὺς πόδας αὐτοῖ). Thus all things are under the feet of his church. The ἐκκλησία ἐστιν τὸ σῶμα αὐτοῦ; she is united to the Head; she is his completion (τὸ πλήρωμα τοῦ). Maybe not in the sense of what may be lacking in Christ, but in the sense of being united with him and being an extension of him. Within the argument of the letter it implies that the church is where he is, in the heavens (in the presence of God). Thus, by being in him the readers lack nothing. They already share (even though only in part) in their inheritance, and this inheritance is to be united to the Head who is in the presence of God.

God. It could be that the antagonists (internal or external) claimed to have overcome such ominous spiritual forces and that they have reached the immediate presence of God. The readers, however, are still deterred from this entrance by these forces.

82 Cf Lemmer (1988:195-204) for an extensive discussion. However, I want to add that this collocation was probably also a ‘technical term’ (a kind of a Stichwort) in the argumentative situation.

83 Reams have been written to explain this ‘obscure’ and thorny collocation. And yet, in spite of all kinds of grammatical and other reasons of content, commentators never feel that they have solved this reference (cf again recently Best 1998:187-189). Any ‘Roman Catholic notion’ of the mystery of the body of Christ is usually rejected by Protestants. One possible explanation, that of ‘Christ being completed by the church’ is usually rejected vehemently, e.g Best (1988: ‘This [the idea of the church being Christ’s completion] is an ingenious solution but the introduction of believers as those who fill Christ comes from nowhere.’ And again (1988): ‘There is no easy solution to the exegesis of v. 23.’ I want to suggest that although one may take Christ to be the subject of thepleroma, and the latter as passive, thepleroma which is the church, is nevertheless the fullest extension of Christ. The Ephesian author did not have the same ‘theological’ qualms as later writers.
This datum is reaffirmed in the next pericope (IV): 2:1–10. Attention can particularly be drawn to verse 6: καί συνήγειρεν καὶ συνεκάθισεν ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰσαοῦ (note again, ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις). The believers are reaffirmed in the fact that they do already share in the heavenly presence of God, and this because of being ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰσαοῦ. He is seated at the right hand of God, and he is their Head; the body is where the Head is, because they are united with him.

3.2.2 Ephesians 2:16–22

Now the author addresses the previous ignominy which was the destiny of all those who were not Israel (i.e. Gentiles); being removed from that which distinguished Israel/Jews. Obviously this notion was still clung to in the current rhetorical situation. However, both these entities have been made together ἐν ἑνὶ σώματι τῷ θεῷ. Together they now constitute a temple and a dwelling place of God.

What is distinctive in the present οἰκονομία, is presented in two foci. On the one hand, (a) the matter of both groups having access into God’s immediate presence (the question is once again: What is the nature of this access?); on the other hand, (b) the one body constitutes an abode for God’s presence. I shall now address these.

(a) Both groups having access into God’s immediate presence:
Oi ἀμφότεροι clearly bears emphasis. It is as the one body of Christ, who is naturally where its Head is—in the heavenlies—that it has this privilege (claimed to be the domain only of those visiting the hekhalot, on account of their ascent to the merkavah). As is done profusely in this letter, so here this προσαγωγή is brought about by ἐν (= in the sphere of) πνεύματι. He is the one who is the dispenser of spiritual blessings (1:3), and yet, it is also he who enables those initiated in Christ, to be able to experience this nearness to God (προς τὸν πατέρα).

(b) The one body constitutes an abode for God’s presence:

The question arises as to the nature of this ‘temple’. The parallelism between εἰς μαθὼν ἁγίων ἐν κυρίῳ (21 37(b)) and εἰς κατοικητήριον τοῦ θεοῦ (22 37(c)(i)), above, clearly signals the connotation of an abode for God. In this case this is the tenor of the metaphor, the vehicle being the temple. Originally moulded on the earthly Temple and the status of the Gentiles at the time, it now has an entirely different reference, namely heaven. Already in its earliest layers of tradition, did the hekhalot mysticism view the Temple as God’s palace (Ὑπώρεια). After the destruction of the Temple, it was believed in some circles that the Temple (as God’s abode) moved back into heaven, and those who

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84 Probably these Jewish believers thought that they had an edge on the Gentile believers in this regard because of their merkavah belief. The author seeks to correct this misgiving by his explanation of the mystical understanding of the body of Christ; not only are they the body of the Head, but together they constitute this entity.

85 The following references to primary sources, indicated by Charlesworth (1983:671 n 9) make it clear that the notion of a temple in heaven was not unfamiliar: 1 En 90:28f; 1Q32; 2Q24; 5Q15; 4QFlor; Tob 14:5; SibOr 5402, 141–444; Jub 1:27–29.

86 Both the Is 6 vision, as well as the Ez visions—both bases of later mystical traditions—would endorse this.
would now visit this temple would have to visit the heavenlies. Thus it is now εν πνεύματι that both the Gentiles and the Jews εν κυρίω, and εν (in the sphere of) πνεύματι would constitute a temple (or ἱερόν) for God.87

It may not be too far fetched to assume that the new metaphor, ἀκρωγω-νιαίον αὐτοῦ Χριστοῦ ᾿Ησοῦ, is somehow related to the Headship idea. Thus this building, made up of its constituents, reaches into the heavenlies, where it is joined together in the capstone;88 the rest makes this possibility clear: 27 37(a) εν ὦ πάσα συναρμολογομένη.

3.2.3 Ephesians 3:3–6 and 3:9–12

This could be a seventh pericope (cf Lemmer 1988:154ff) and of course it runs from 3:1–13. For practical reasons I will only concentrate on the above sections.

3 40 (a) ὅτι κατὰ ἀποκάλυψιν ἐγνωρίσθη μοι τὸ μυστήριον,
(b) καθὼς προέγραψα ἐν ὀλίγω,
(c) πρὸς δὲ δύνασθαι ἀναγινώσκοντες νοῆσαι τὴν σύνεσιν μον ἐν τῷ μυστηρίῳ τοῦ Χριστοῦ,

4 41 (a) δὲ ἐτέρας γενεάς οὐκ ἐγνωρίσθη τοῖς οὐσίς τῶν ἀνθρώπων
(b) ὡς νῦν ἀπεκαλύφθη τοῖς ἁγίοις ἀποστόλωι αὐτοῦ καὶ προφήταις εν πνεύματι,

5 42 (c) εἶναι τὰ ζήσιν συγκληρονόμα καὶ σύσσωμα καὶ συμμέτοχα τῆς ἐπαγγελίας ἐν Χριστῷ ᾿Ησοῦ διὰ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου.

The use of ἀποκάλυψιν along with μυστήριον89 in verse 3 is of significance. What is related here, refers to a specific revelation which the author claims to have received,90 in which the nature of the body of Christ was disclosed to

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87 This appears to be anomalous; being an abode for God, and yet visiting God in his abode. But it is exactly this kind of anomalous thinking that intersperses both apocalyptic and mystical thinking.
88 Best (1998:284ff) adduces in the end that deciding between 'cornerstone' and 'capstone' is insoluble at this stage. Although he also relates the 'capstone' idea to the Headship, he runs into difficulty since he wants to 'push' the metaphor to its logical limits. The understanding suggested by myself reminds one of 4:15–16. If the referent for 'temple' were to have been only the Temple at Jerusalem, then the notion of 'cornerstone' would have been more convincing.
89 Best (1998:301–33) correctly points out that in both Col (1:26) and here in Eph the mystery is something that was unknown before, but that this content cannot simply refer to the gospel. The content resides in the area of the Gentiles being part of God's people, cf also Gl 1:11f, 15f; 2:2 and 16:25. Furthermore, this revelation is closely tied up with the person of Paul. I argue that it is not only that the Gentiles are part, but the mode in which they are part; in the body related to the Head in a mystical fashion (cf below in text).
90 The nature of the revelatory claim here is different from that in Gl 1 and 2, where the claim is made in order to authenticate Paul's apostolic ministry. The claim here en-
him; that body which stretches into the Head, and that body which comprised both Gentiles and Jewish believers in the Christ. It is not that the body would consist of Jews and Gentiles that is a datum undisclosed in the Old Testament era, but it is the way in which both Jews and Gentiles are incorporated into one body in Christ, as 5 41(c), above, explains: ἐνῷ τὰ ἔθνη συγκλητονοῦμα καὶ σύνσωμα καὶ συμμέτοχα τῆς ἐπαγγελίας ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ διὰ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου. It is not merely the togetherness of Jew and Gentile in the setup of the ἐκκλησία (in whatever locale), but it is that they together (σύνσωμα) are the ‘body of the Head—Christ’. This body is linked to its Head in heaven, in a mystical (mysterious) fashion. Being part of this body, they also share in the same inheritance (συγκλητονοῦμα) of God’s immediate presence, as it was explained in 1:10-14, 1:15-23 and 2:1-10 (and continued in the immediately preceding 2:19-22). Thus their ingress lies in being mystically part of the Head (and so of the body), who is seated at the right hand of the Father.

The author repeats that God made ἡ οἰκονομία τοῦ μυστηρίου known, in which (by divine privilege) he is playing an important role. The issue here is not the μυστηρίου, although it is included, but it is the actual οἰκονομία (the plan) of this mystery. Now follows another of those momentous statements. This plan (of the mystery) is in fact: ἀποκεκρυμμένου ἀπὸ τῶν αἰώνων ἐν τῷ θεῷ τῷ τὰ πάντα κτίσατε.

9 (c) καὶ φωτίσαι {πάντα} τῆς ἡ οἰκονομία τοῦ μυστηρίου
   (d) τοῦ ἀποκεκρυμμένου ἀπὸ τῶν αἰώνων ἐν τῷ θεῷ τῷ τὰ πάντα κτίσατε.
10 (e) ἐνα γινομεθ’ ὧν τοῖς ἄρχαίς καὶ τοῖς ἐξουσίαις ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις διὰ τῆς ἐκκλησίας ἡ πολυποικίας σοφία τοῦ θεοῦ.
11 (f) κατὰ πρόθεσιν τῶν αἰώνων ἤν ἐποίησαν ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ τῷ κυρίῳ ἡμῶν.
12 44 ἐν δὲ ἔχομεν τὴν παραρθήσιαν καὶ προσαγωγήν ἐν πεποίθησει διὰ τῆς πίστεως αὐτοῦ.

The author repeats that God made ἡ οἰκονομία τοῦ μυστηρίου known, in which (by divine privilege) he is playing an important role. The issue here is not the μυστηρίου, although it is included, but it is the actual οἰκονομία (the plan) of this mystery. Now follows another of those momentous statements. This plan (of the mystery) is in fact: ἀποκεκρυμμένου ἀπὸ τῶν αἰώνων ἐν τῷ θεῷ τῷ τὰ πάντα κτίσατε.

compasses the particular content of that which was seen; which was the vision of the body of Christ, in a merkavah style revelation.

91 Though not conclusively supported by the manuscript evidence, I maintain the reading of ἐν before τῷ θεῷ, along with Nestle-Aland 26th Revised Edition, Aland et al (1975). Cf also Best (1998:320-321). Further comment on the possible interpretation will be provided in the following discussion.

92 The question is, what is the ‘force’ of this preposition. Is it merely instrumental? Or is it local? Given the apocalyptic overtones we have in this passage as well as the momentousness of the statement of ‘since when’ and ‘where’ this plan was already hidden, then the ‘local’ explanation may be apropos. In God Himself was this hidden.
Once again (as in 1:4f) the language is redolent of apocalyptic thinking; this plan of the disclosure of the mystery, was conceived in God Himself, before all ages (before creation). Moreover, God waited until now, that it would be the one body (đia τῆς ἐκκλησίας of Christ) who would demonstrate to principalities and authorities in the heavens (iôa γνωρισθῇ ὑμῖν ταῖς ἀρχαίς καὶ τοῖς ἐξουσίαις ἐν τοῖς ἑπταργήσεις) this wonder of God's plan, now described as: ἡ πολυποίκιλος σοφία τοῦ θεοῦ, κατὰ πρόθεσιν τῶν αἰώνων ἦν ἐποίησεν τὸ Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν κυρίω ἡμῶν. Thus when the ἀρχαίς καὶ τοῖς ἐξουσίαις ἐν τοῖς ἑπταργήσεις sees the body of Christ united to its Head, seated at the right hand of the Father, they will marvel. Then it is reiterated again, that they are in this presence of God: 12 (44) ἐν ὧν ἔχουμεν τὴν παραρτήσιαν καὶ προσαγωγὴν ἐν προσωπικῇ διὰ τῆς πίστεως αὐτοῦ. It is in their union with Christ that the ecclesia have both παραρτήσια and προσαγωγὴ, and not by any other rituals or quests. This way of demonstrating to the unseen universe, and those in proximity of God, had been predetermined by God.

3.2.4 Ephesians 3:14-21

14 47 (a) Τοῦτου χάριν κάμπτω τὰ γόνατά μοι πρὸς τὸν κατέρχα.
(b) εἰς οὐ πάσῃ πατρία ἐν οἰκουμενῇ καὶ ἐπὶ γῆς ὄνωμάζεται,
(c) ἵνα δῷ ὑμῖν κατὰ τὸ πλοῦτος τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ
(d) δυνάμεις κραταιωθήσεται
(i) διὰ τοῦ πνεύματος αὐτοῦ
(ii) εἰς τῶν ἐναρμωνῶν,
15 (c) κατακυκλώσας τὸν Χριστὸν
(i) διὰ τῆς πίστεως
(ii) ἐν τοῖς καρδίαις ὑμῶν,
16 (f) ἐν ἀγάπῃ ἐρριζώμενοι
(g) καὶ τεθεμελιωμένοι.
17 47.1 (a) ἵνα ἐξισχύσῃ
to θέμαθε
(b) καταλαβέσσατι σὺν πάσιν τοῖς ἁγίοις τῷ τὸ
πλάτος καὶ μήκος καὶ ὕψος καὶ βάθος,
18 (c) γνώναι τῇ ὑπερβάλλουσα τῆς γνώσεως ἀγάπην τοῦ Χριστοῦ,
47.1.1 ἵνα πληρωθῇ εἰς ψωμί τῷ πλήρωμα τοῦ θεοῦ.
19 48 (a) Τῷ δὲ δυναμεὶν ὑπὲρ πάντα τοι hath
(b) ὑπερεκπερισσοῦ διὰ αἰτούμεθα
(c) ἡ νοούμεν
(d) κατὰ τὴν δύναμιν τῆς ἐνεργούμενην ἐν ἡμῖν,
20 (a) Τῷ δὲ δυναμεὶν ὑπὲρ πάντα τοι hath
(b) ὑπερεκπερισσοῦ διὰ αἰτούμεθα
(c) ἡ νοούμεν
(d) κατὰ τὴν δύναμιν τῆς ἐνεργούμενην ἐν ἡμῖν,
21 (c) αὐτῷ ἡ δόξα
(i) ἐν τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ
(ii) καὶ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ
(iii) εἰς πάσας τῶν γενεάς τοῦ αἰῶνος τῶν αἰώνων ἡμῖν.
The above passage is an extension of the previous 'momentous' disclosure passage (3:3-12). One may well sum up this prayer: the resumption of intercession for the Spirit to effectuate comprehension of the encompassing body. This encompass is obviously not physical with literal dimensions; the dimensions are given to accentuate the way in which the 'body' should understand its own significance as it 'stretches into heaven' into Christ, and as it encompasses both Jews and Gentiles: καταλαβέθαι σὺν πᾶσιν τοῖς ἀγίοις τί το πλάτος καὶ μήκος καὶ ύψος καὶ βάθος, κτλ. Of significance is the notion of a mutual δόξα between body and Head (Christ and church): 21 αὐτῷ ἡ δόξα ἐν τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ καὶ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ. This is even more significant, when one keeps in mind that δόξα is that which surrounds the throne of God, where the Christ93 and his church is.

3.2.5 Ephesians 4:3–6

3 (d) συνδέσοντες τηρεῖν τὴν ἐνότητα τοῦ πνεύματος ἐν τῷ συνδέσμῳ τῆς εἰρήνης.

4 50 ἐν ἀдрια
51 καὶ ἐν πνεύμα.
52 καθὼς καὶ ἐκλήθητε ἐν μιᾷ ἑλπίδι τῆς κλήσεως ύμῶν.

5 53 εἰς κύριος,
54 μια πίστις,
55 ἐν βάπτισμοι.

6 56 εἰς θεός καὶ πατὴρ πάντων,
57 ὁ ἐπὶ πάντων καὶ διὰ πάντων καὶ ἐν πάσιν.

It becomes clear from the former passages, that what they reflected would be the basis for the appeal for practical harmony of this body, with its high and exalted unity. Of the essential elements of the faith (vv 4-6), there can only be one manifestation of each; thus to multiply these would be ludicrous.94

3.2.6 Ephesians 4:12–16

15 64 (a) ἀληθεύοντες δὲ ἐν ἀγάπῃ
(b) αὐξήσωμεν εἰς αὐτὸν τὰ πάντα.

93 In Col and Heb Christ himself is the δόξα of God. This notion was developed in the interfaces which originated in the intertestamental period (cf. Fossum 1983).
94 Diversity of traditions in Christianity is inevitable given history, cultures, church practice and the like. However, this (probably credal) passage—if taken to be normative—would negate some of the beliefs and manifestations of the 'bodies' of Christ.
95 I just briefly remark on 4:15–16, even though there are clearly important elements in the preceding passage.
It may be that the author moves to a different view of the Head-body 'metaphor', such as to a physiological picture or vehicle. If so, it is to explain the practical implications of what he has taught so far. Clearly, from this passage, Christ is both the very raison d'être of the body, its very wellspring of life; and yet it is also the goal to which it should grow.

3.2.7 Ephesians 5:23-30

Within the greater discourse the extent and the intent of this passage is much wider, nevertheless, the example of Christ's intent toward the church remains valid, and has bearing for the present essay. I refer specifically to 'καὶ προσκολληθῆσαι πρὸς τὴν γυναίκα αὐτοῦ, ἀντὶ τοῦτου' (113(a)), which is mysterious, and resides in the mystical, as was argued before.

To look for 'deeper' meanings for marriage (and for Gn 2:24) in connection with 5:31–32 (114(a)–115(a)(ii)), is unnecessary if one understands the ex-

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96 Cf e.g the discussion by Best (1998:553ff), in which he provides an overview of numerous explanations such as typological, etc.
pression literally and in the overall sense of the mystical union between Christ and church: Head and body. Thus far in this pericope on the marriage relationship, the 'role model' of marriage was Christ and the church (and vice versa); now not as role-model but as analogy, the particular act of προσκολληθησεται in which a man forsakes all, as well as the καὶ ἔσονται οἱ δύο εἰς σύρκα μίαν, becomes the analogy of the union of Christ and the church. Assuming that the content of the mystery is more or less the same as elsewhere in Ephesians, then it is the mystical union between Christ and his body, the body and its Head, that is in focus here. The mystical resides in the sphere of heaven and earth that is joined together; and where the Head is, there the body must also be. Their unity is a sīne quā non.

4 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

4.1 Possible intersecting with contemporary cultural backgrounds

Casting the net wider than the usual salvation historical approach, will inevitably cast the Ephesian communicative situation in a different perspective. Therefore, seriously considering that although there may be the direct incorporation of Old Testament traditions, it is the Jewish mystic-apocalyptic interfaces (reflected in Qumranic, pseudepigraphal and other writings) which are more felicitous to set the stage for the understanding of the argumentative situation. Taking into consideration a number of external factors in Western Asia Minor at the time, makes this assumption probable.

4.2 The rhetorical situation

The author draws upon Pauline traditions to address the problem of the status of their identity and resultant lack of religious experience of the Ephesian readership. Certain Jewish Christians possibly advocated exceptional spiritual standing and experiences on the basis of their involvement with merkavah practices and beliefs. The author appeals to his unique understanding of the body of Christ (disclosed to him in 'mystic-apocalyptic' understanding), as something that has been hidden in God before all ages. The content of this—the reaching of the body into its Head—is so momentous, that the readers may not have understood it yet. The author employs intercession (as rhetorical tool) on behalf of the obtuseness of the readers. It may shame them to realise that they need not have paid attention to διασκολίας ἐν τῇ κυβείᾳ τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἐν πανοργίᾳ πρὸς τὴν μεθοδείαν τῆς πλάνης (4:14-15).

4.3 The nature of the body of Christ in Ephesians

The author counters their belief, by dissertating on the nature of the body of Christ. This is one element of the letter that can now be understood dif-
ferently because of the intersecting with contemporary cultural background of Jewish mysticism, the way it is understood in this essay. More than the usually advocated representative relationship between body and Head is at issue in Ephesians. If it had only been the latter, then the argument would not be cogent to its readers and the 'antagonists', who proclaimed different views. The nature of the body is of epochal significance, as is indicated by the use of musterion. Ultimately, the connection between soma and musterion emerges as a very salient and significant connection. It is this connection that needs to be investigated further still, since I think it holds a key to the understanding of soma in this letter. Furthermore, there are clearly mystical dimensions to the body of Christ, because of the way in which it is related to the Head. The body is the extension of the Head, and is where the Head is, in heaven. In this way all those in union with the Head has a 'mystical relationship', not those who purport a higher status because of their Jewishness and involvement with merkavah. That body of Christ is pervasive in this letter, is clear from its connections with several other concepts: musterion, Spirit, doxa, heavenlies, kleronomia, principalities, powers, and the like.

In reading ‘body’ consistently against this backdrop, it is clear that in the world of the author and the readers there is more than metaphor at stake; there is a reality being argued, not only an expression by means of the vehicle of body and head (although that as well); but a reality as it was conceived in mystical-theological circles of how God related to this world and to the redeemed.

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