

3. RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN PERICOPES AND THE OVERALL STRUCTURE OF EPHESIANS

Although Paul arranged his material in such a way that it is possible to distinguish ‘chunks’ which are called pericopes, the whole letter to the Ephesians is coherent. After having discussed the boundaries of each pericope in the relevant chapters, I now wish to point out the ways in which the pericopes are joined together to form the cohesive whole known as the Letter to the Ephesians. It will be seen that, apart from discourse markers and other devices which indicate transitions between pericopes, there is an overlapping between pericopes which serves to bind the discourse together. This is on a larger scale similar to the phenomenon of association in Paul’s style, which was pointed out e.g. in the chapter on pericope 2. There seems to be association even across pericope boundaries, so that there are common factors, lexical or semantic in adjoining pericopes. What I mean by this should become clearer in the discussion which follows.

In many commentaries, Eph 1.1 and 2 is so absolutely severed from the body of the letter that it is regarded as totally separate. Yet pericope 2 commences with the same words as pericope 1 contains. Compare the following.

1, 2.4-7 θεοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ

2, 1.1 ὁ θεὸς καὶ πατὴρ τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ

Pericope 3 is linked to pericope 2 by διὰ τοῦτο, suggesting that what was said in 2 is the reason for what it about to be said in 3. But in addition to this overt link it does not seem to be a coincidence that 3, 1.6 and .7 is a transformation of 2, 4.7 and .8 (the former ἐν ᾧ καὶ πιστεύσαντες with ὑμεῖς understood, the latter τὴν καθ’ ὑμᾶς πίστιν ἐν τῷ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ).

This correlation is emphasized by the occurrence of ἀκούσας in 2, 4.5 and again in 3, 1.5. In the case of πιστεῦεῖν the experiencers as well as the goals are identical in the two occurrences. In the case of ἐκούσας of course, they differ, the agent in pericope 2 being the Ephesians, while Paul is the agent in pericope 3. Yet the mere fact that the same word is used in close proximity with, and in relation to ἀκουεῖν in both pericopes serves as link between the two pericopes.

As was pointed out in the chapter on pericope 4, καὶ in 4, 1.1 does not link pericope 4 to pericope 3 syntactically but is a discourse marker introducing new information. As such it is a stylistic device. An obvious link between the two pericopes is, however, established by the repetition of the verbs used in 3, 1.27 and .29, in 4, 5.1 and 6.1. In pericope 4 the prefix συν- is added, so that they compare as follows.

3, 1.27 ἐγείρας;

4, 5.1 συνήγειρεν

3, 1.29 καθίσας;

4, 6.1 συνεκάθισεν

In 4, 6.2 Paul repeats verbatim 3, 1.31 ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις, further underlining the association. There is also a connection between 3, 1.39 (ἐν τῷ μέλλοντι with αἰῶνι understood) and 4, 6.5 (ἐν τοῖς αἰῶσιν τοῖς ἐπερχομένοις).

Διὸ in pericope 5, colon 1.1, establishes a causal relationship between pericopes 4 and 5. Pericope 5 is the conclusion drawn after the reasoning in pericope 4. It is striking that in both pericopes, a contrast is clearly drawn between the condition of the heathen before and after they are saved. In 4 συνεζωποίσεν sums this up very well. They have been changed from ὄντας νεκρούς (4, 1.2) through συνήγειρεν (5.1) and συνεκάθισεν (6.1). In 5 ποτέ (1.2) and νῦν (2.2) are the chief indicators of the change. It will be seen later in this chapter that much of what Ephesians contains hinges upon this type of contrast, but it does seem to be especially distinct in pericope 4 and 5, so that they are felt to be closely related by virtue of this similarity.

Τούτου χάριν in pericope 6, 1.1 serves as a link with pericope 5, once more indicating causality. In pericope 6, Paul writes about his own ministry in this wonderful change that God has wrought in the lives of people. Colon 3.18-23 of pericope 6 contains in essence what pericope 5 is all about. It seems as if there is once more a semantic as well as a lexical link between the two pericopes. After the frequent references to what pertains to the household in pericope 5 (οἰκεῖοι τοῦ θεοῦ in 5, 7.1; οἰκοδομηθέντε in 5, 7.4; ἀκρογωνιαίου in 4, 7.8; πάντα οἰκοδομή in 5, 7.11; ναὸν ἅγιον in 5,7.12; συνοικοδοεῖσθε in 5,7.15 and κατοικητήριον in 5, 7.16), οἰκονομίαν in 6, 2.1 seems too pointed to be a coincidence. The semantic link exists, of course in the reference to what pertains to a house or household, the lexical link in the occurrence of οἰκ-.

Pericopes 6 and 7 are closely associated not syntactically, but by the repetition of τούτου χάριν in 7, 1.1, apparently indicating the resumption of the anacoluthon in 6, 1.1.

Commentators generally agree that Eph 3.21 is the end of the first section which is characterized by statements of a doctrinal nature, in contrast with the second half which is ethical. Ἀμήν in pericope 7, 3.1 marks the end of the first half. It seems significant that there is no apparent lexical link between pericope 7 and 8 of the kind pointed out above in other pericopes. Οὖν in 8, 1 is another discourse marker (like καὶ in 4, 1.1), not necessarily indicating by itself anything about the relationship between what precedes and what follows it.

There are closer links between pericope 8 and 9. Παρακαλῶ οὖν ὑμᾶς (8, 1.1) is similar to τοῦτο οὖν λέγω καὶ μαρτύρομαι (9, 1.1) as is ἀξίως περιπατῆσαι (8, 1.3) and μηκέτι ὑμᾶς περιπατεῖν καθὼς καὶ τὰ ἔθνη περιπατεῖ (9, 1.2 and .3).

Διὸ in 10, 1.1 introduces the conclusion drawn after colons 5-7 of pericope 9. Pericope 10 is structured in pairs of colons in which the contrast between the old life and the new is described. This binary structure of pericope 10 reflects the contrast in pericope 9, between colon 1 on the one hand and colons 5-7 on the other. Although now obvious lexical similarities exist between

pericopes 10 and 11, there is a semantic relationship between 10, 27.6 (κληρονομίαν ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ τοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ θεοῦ) and 11, 2.1 (συμμέτοχα αὐτῶν). It is an exclusive relationship which implies that membership in the one precludes membership in the other. This serves as a bond in the discourse between the two pericopes.

The way in which pericopes 11 and 12 are joined by means of ὑποτασσόμενοι has already been discussed in the relevant chapters and will therefore merely be noted here.

The link between 12 and 13 is in the identical reference to the Lord in 12, 22.5 and .6 and 3, 1.1-.3.

Finally, Paul seems to anticipate the personal nature of pericope 14, colon 1, in 13, 6.14, where he asks that intercession should be made for him personally.

Apart from the links between pericopes formally indicated as discussed above, there are other relationships which have to be taken into account. Pericope 2 contains an exhaustive description of the blessings which God has bestowed upon mankind in making it possible for them to be saved. Houlden, 265, says about pericope 2: “In setting out so comprehensively the Christian gospel of salvation, this passage acts as a basis for the rest of Ephesians, which goes on to develop its ideas.” Sampley, 37, represents the structure of Ephesians diagrammatically to indicate a narrowing focus from the beginning (“God’s cosmic plan”) to the end (God’s plan for the individual).

God’s cosmic plan	the church	the household	individuals
Chapter 1 & 2	Chapter 3, 4, first half of 5	Chapter 5, 6.9	Chapter 6.10-20

By this representation he indicates that Eph 1.3-14 states the basic message of the letter, which is then applied constantly throughout the rest of the text. Bouwman, 19, says: “Het leerstellige gedeelte is volledig ingebed in het openingsgebed dat eindigt met de doxologie, 3, 21.”

What can be stated confidently is that pericope 2 is in its entirety a statement of the blessings God gives. Pericopes 3 and 7 are prayers in which Paul expresses his desire that the Ephesians may fully understand what God has given them. Pericopes 4 and 5 describe how God brought the gentiles into association with himself through Jesus Christ. Therefore, 4 and 5 explain how all the blessings of God became available to the gentiles. Pericope 6 is about Paul’s own ministry as a part of the salvation of the heathen because of what God has done through Jesus Christ. Relationships between these pericopes are indicated in the schematic presentation later in this chapter.

The second half of Ephesians commences with Eph 4.1 (pericope 8) and is a practical application of what was stated in the first three chapters (pericopes 2-7). In this section, Eph 4.4-16 is similar in style to the doctrinal section. Yet it is part of the practical application, being, as it were, a parenthetical theological treatment of the relation one-to-many in the church, to provide the grounds for the exhortation in pericope 8, 1.8 σπουδάζοντες τηρεῖν τὴν ἐνότητα (Eph 4.3). Pericopes 9-13 all contain practical applications of the foregoing doctrinal reasoning.

Pericopes 1 and 14 are the opening and closing sections of the letter, containing salutations and greetings.

Characteristic in the letter is the presentation of the material in the form of contrasts. Pericope 4 compares the old life and the new to the difference between death and life. Pericope 5 hinges upon the contrast between death and life. Pericope 5 hinges upon the contrast “before” (ποτε) and “now” (νῦν), as Bouwman, 64, also points out. Although not in the broad perspective of salvation, pericope 6 contains a contrast between revelation before and now (3.10 and .11 οὐκ γνωρίσθε ἐτέραις γενέαις, and 3.13 and .14 ὡς ἀπεκαλύφθη νῦν). In pericope 8 the contrast between εἶς and πάντες is skillfully employed to bring across the same message that there must be unity in the church in spite of diversity. In pericope 9 the contrast is between παλαιὸς ἄνθρωπος and καινὸς ἄνθρωπος. In pericope 11, σκότος and φῶς are contrasted. Pericope 13 rests in its entirety upon the antithesis between God and his people on the one hand and Satan and the powers submitted to him on the other.

I would like to suggest that the division into two sections (chapters 1-3 and 4-6) correlates with the characteristic of contrastive presentation in the entire letter.

Another aspect of structure that is worthy of notice is the frequent use of chiasm and parallelism. Chiasm appears e.g. in pericope 2, 2.4-7; pericope 3, 2.1-2 and 3.2; pericope 5, 1.10, .11 and 7.6, .7; pericope 5, 2.1 and .4 and 4.3 and .4; pericope 7, 1.27 and .28; pericope 8, 13.1-5 and .9 and .10; pericope 12, 1.1 and 4.1; 14.1 and 15.1; 1.1, .3, .4, 2.1, 3.2, 3.1 (where parallelism also appears), 1.4 and 2.1.¹ Parallelism is used successfully in e.g. pericope 4, 3; 4, 1 and 11; 5, 3.1, .3, .9, .14.

As regards the theme of Ephesians, numbers of writers have formulated it in as many ways.² The best way to arrive at a conclusion with regard to the theme may be to briefly consider in succession the themes of all the pericopes.

1. Opening and salutation.
2. “All spiritual blessings.” A full description of what salvation entails and how God made it available to mankind.
3. Prayer that the readers should comprehend fully what God has given them in Christ, ending in a doxology in which Christ is portrayed as elevated above all else. The church is his body, his fullness.

4. “By grace you have been saved.” The condition of those who are saved is like that of someone who was dead, but then made alive. This came about by God, through Jesus Christ.
5. God brought the heathen, who were far from him, near, by breaking down the wall which divided them from him, i.e. the law.
6. Paul’s ministry, by the grace of God, in the mystery of how God saved the heathen through Christ.
7. Prayer that the Ephesians should comprehend the love of Christ, ending in a doxology in which God is glorified as having power to do far beyond man’s comprehension.
8. In the unity between believers, there is a ministry for each one. This has been given to each of them by Christ who was raised above everything else. He is the head of the church.
9. The old life and the new.
10. Practical Christian living.
11. Light and darkness.
12. Human relationships among Christians, in marriage, the family, and between masters and servants.
13. The armour of God, necessary in the struggle with the powers of darkness.
14. Final greetings.

From this it seems that the theme of Ephesians is salvation, especially in the case of the gentiles, and how they should live now that they are saved. The interrelationships of the pericopes can be presented schematically as on p 145:

Because of the very nature of salvation as an act of God towards man, one would expect God and Christ to be prominent in the letter to the Ephesians. An examination of the text will reveal that this is indeed so in the first half of the letter. The second half, with its exhortations as to the practicalities of everyday Christian living, focuses on believers.

In pericopes 1 to 7 then, God is prominent as agent and experiencer, and Christ as mediator. Pericope 1 already lays the basis for this with its references to God (1.3, 2.4) and Christ (1.2, .8, 2.7). As was pointed out in the chapter in pericope 1, and they remain the two other prominent entities throughout the letter. Pericope 2 establishes God’s prominence immediately in colon 1.1, as in 1.2, .6, .12, .18. Christ is just as clearly portrayed as mediator, in 1.5, .7, .14, .19, 2.2, .4, .19, 3.1, 3.2, 4.2, 4.8. Often, but not always, the formula ἐν Χριστῷ indicates Christ as mediator. Sometimes it indicates association, best rendered as “in union with Christ.”³ In pericope 3, God is once more prominent, as the addressees of Paul’s prayer, from whom reaction is expected, cf. 1.10. Christ is given growing prominence in pericope 3, where He is portrayed as having been elevated by God, first being raised from the dead, and finally raised to a position of highest authority. By association with Christ, the church is also prominently displayed, 3.5-7. God is once more given prominence in pericope 4, by the key colon 3.1 ὁ δὲ θεὸς συνεζωοποίησεν. Parallel with the ascendancy of Christ in pericope 3, the Ephesians (ὁμεῖς) gain prominence in pericope 4, as they are said to be elevated in union with Christ (5.1, 6.1). In pericope 5 Christ seems to be more prominent again. As was shown in the chapter on pericope 5, the words τὸν

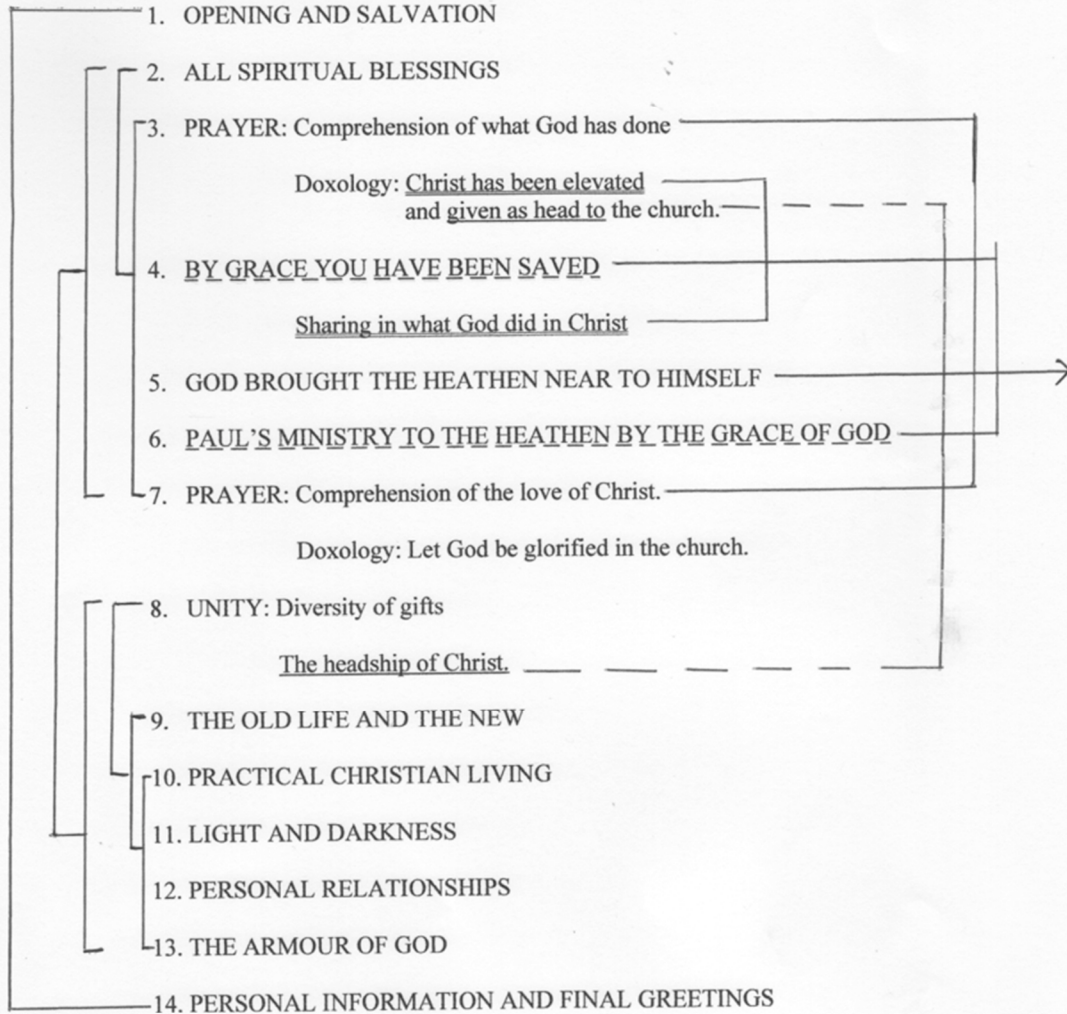
νόμον τῶν ἐντολῶν ἐν δόγμασιν καταργήσας are the focal point, and in this colon, Christ is the agent. The other entity in focus is the heathen who have been saved --- cf. ὑμεῖς τὰ ἔθνη in 1.2, ὑμεῖς in 2.1, ὑμῖν in 4.2, ὑμεῖς understood in 6.1, 7.1 and ὑμεῖς in 7.15.

Paul is prominent in pericope 6 (ἐγώ, 1.1; μοι 2.2; μοι 3.1; ἐμοι 4.1; μου 5.3). In talking about his own ministry, Paul emphasizes the μυστήριον of God and elaborates upon it.

Pericope 7 places all persons named thus far in perspective: God the Father (τὸν πατέρα, 1.1), the Holy Spirit (τοῦ πνεύματος αὐτοῦ, 1.8); Christ (τὸν Χριστόν, 1.10), Paul, (κάμπτω τὰ γόνατά μου, 1.1), the Ephesians (ὑμῖν, 1.5). The Ephesians are prominent. They are the recipients of what God is to give in 1.5 and experiencers of κραταιωθῆναι (1.7), κατοικῆσαι τὸν Χριστόν (1.10), πίστεως (1.11), ἐρριζωμένοι (1.13), τεθεμελιωμένοι (1.14), ἐξισχύσητε (1.16), καταλαβέσθαι (1.17), γνῶναι (1.23) and πληρωθῆτε (1.26). As stated above, from pericope 8 onwards, the readers are in focus. In pericope 14, however, the four entities named in pericope 1 are named again: The Ephesians (1.2), Paul (1.2), God and Christ (2.5 and .6). Apart from being the close of the letter and therefore to a large extent formal, pericope 14 rounds off the discourse by returning to the same perspectives as at the beginning.

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The structure of Ephesians can be represented diagrammatically as follows:



Roberts, 1982, Introduction 8 and 9, has an exhaustive tabulation of Ephesians. Although his pericope division differs from the division suggested in this dissertation, there is similarity with regard to main themes and their interrelatedness.

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FOOTNOTES

1. Angelico Di Marco finds evidence of chiasm in the broad structure of the letter. His comments are based entirely on content, and are precarious in the sense that what he feels are themes may not be recognized as such by others.
2. E.G. Chadwick, 980, “The theme is the Church, one holy, catholic, and apostolic, divinely planned and founded for the redemption of humanity in Christ in virtue of his reconciling work.” Hendriksen, 102, “God’s (or Christ’s) great love for his people, and the love they owe Him and one another in return....There is not a single chapter in which this theme is not stressed.” Lloyd-Jones, 1978: 12, “The theme of the Epistle, first and foremost, is God.” Although all three these are themes appearing in the letter, I think Bouwman, 24, is nearer the truth when he says that the main theme is “het heilsplan van God”, and adds that the core of the letter is “de verzoening van joden en heidenen in Christus.”
3. The expression ἐν Χριστῷ is a favourite with commentators. Cf. however, also Kourie and Allan for articles.