

Marital Imagery in the Bible

*An Exploration of Genesis 2:24 and its Significance for the Understanding of New Testament
Divorce and Remarriage Teaching*

Colin Hamer

ΑΠΟΣΤΟΛΟΣ

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Acknowledgments

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Foreword by William A. Heth

The biblical teaching on divorce and remarriage is clouded by the question of whether or not a duly covenanted and consummated marriage results in a mystical, ontological, indissoluble union which is permanent this side of death. Something close to that conception is the prism through which I once read the biblical passages on marriage, divorce, and remarriage, as have many others.

For me, the genesis of the assumption that marriage creates a near-indissoluble union came early in my seminary studies when an author I was reading made a statement to this effect. I found evidence for this in the kinship laws in Leviticus 18 which are rooted in the Genesis 2:24 concept that husband and wife become 'one flesh' or related kin. I argued that marriage creates vertical blood relationships in the form of children and horizontal 'one flesh' relationships between spouses that are just as permanent. Further, the Levitical prohibitions seemed to endure the death of one of the links in the relationship.

I saw further evidence for marriage permanence in Jesus' teaching in Matthew and Mark when, after quoting Genesis 2:24, Jesus repeated so as to stress 'So they are no longer two but one flesh.' Neither Mark, Luke, nor Paul seemed to be aware of the Matthean exception permitting remarriage after divorce for adultery, and when Paul did specifically address the possibility of a second marriage, in both contexts he connected it to the death of one of the spouses (1 Cor. 7:39; Rom. 7:2–3).

But twenty years into my ongoing study I was confronted with concepts that undermined what I thought was a tight case. I had to admit that when a man marries a woman they do not *literally* become 'one flesh'. The point of ancient Near Eastern covenants was to establish a relationship through a volitional commitment that included obligations with someone who was *not* a relative. Covenants were the vehicle for extending the loyalties that attended kinship relationships to unrelated entities. Thus the one flesh marriage relationship does *not* make husbands and wives as closely related as they will be to their own flesh and blood children.

Though still debated, I also came to the conclusion that covenants could be broken when the responsibilities pledged were not forthcoming. Adultery was such a serious violation of the marriage covenant throughout the ancient Near East and in the Old Testament that it could be punished by death. If adultery was not only an offense committed against an injured husband, but also an offense committed against God (Gen. 20:6-10; Psalm 51:4), then I had to admit that Jesus, the Son of God, may have made an exception for the permanence of marriage in the face of this sin.

I also somehow missed that Paul's statement in 1 Corinthians 7:15, 'the brother or sister is not bound in such circumstances' (NIV), is a virtual negative restatement of the essential formula in the Jewish bill of divorce 'You are free to marry any man' (*m. Git.* 9:3). I can now sympathize with the candid point made by one New Testament background specialist when he said if Paul wanted to say that remarriage was not permitted, he said precisely the opposite of what he meant. And since Paul envisioned another situation that admitted of remarriage, this also meant that the unqualified version of Jesus's divorce sayings were never meant to be understood as exceptionless absolutes.

Finally, with David Instone-Brewer and others, I concluded that the only way to make sense of Jesus's teaching that the one who remarries after divorce commits adultery is to assume that the divorce was invalid. Matthew's account makes this assumption explicit and essentially endorses the Shammaite reading Deuteronomy 24:1 that divorce is permitted—not commanded—in such situations.

But how can we be sure? And what about 1 Corinthians 6:16 where Paul cites a portion of Genesis 2:24: 'Or do you not know that he who is joined to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For, as it is written, "The two will become one flesh"' (ESV). Some recent studies argue that Paul's citation of Genesis 2:24 means he

believed sexual relations with a literal prostitute create an ontological union. How do we address these and other questions that still cloud the skies of how to responsibly understand and apply the biblical teaching on marriage, divorce, and remarriage today?

This is where Colin Hamer's amazing study enters in. This conceptually integrative study on *Marital Imagery in the Bible* uses both traditional metaphor theory and more recent developments in concept mapping to engage the considerable corpus of published material that considers marital imagery in Scripture. Hamer shows there is no evidence that Jewish or Christian marriage teaching is rooted in the Genesis 2:23 *literal* flesh and blood connection of the primal couple. This neoplatonic model of indissoluble marriage patterned after the original couple first appears in the intertestamental period, and even there the evidence is scanty; nor is the primal couple marriage model a part of the implied readership of the New Testament. Rather, Hamer shows that the conceptual domain for marital imagery in the Bible is sourced in the Genesis 2:24 teaching that a woman becomes the wife of a man in a *metaphoric* one-flesh union formed by means of a volitional, conditional covenant. Hamer cross-maps this through the Pentateuch and the Prophets to *Yahweh: the Husband of Israel* and in the Gospels and Apocalypse to *Jesus: The Bridegroom of the Church* and more.

In short, the teaching of Jesus and Paul is rooted in and informed by marital imagery found throughout Scripture, and this imagery can be used as a hermeneutical tool to help sort out disputed New Testament texts. Marital imagery, according to metaphor theory, must have a source domain that is rooted in the experience of the intended audience if it is going to mean anything, and any exegesis of the New Testament teaching on mundane marriage should cohere with the marital imagery it employs. Hamer points out that as divorce and remarriage is central to all the Bible's marital imagery, it would be expected that both concepts will be evidenced in contemporary marriage practice and New Testament teaching.

The reader is in for a surprise, too, when Hamer addresses a common assumption by those who hold more restrictive views of divorce and remarriage, namely that gender reciprocity in New Testament divorce teaching can be assumed. Actually, Hamer argues this is an ill-founded assumption given the social milieu, relies on two improbable assumptions about the one and only statement in the Gospels addressing the matter from the wife's perspective (Mark 10:12), is incongruent with the New Testament's own marital imagery, and ultimately curtails a wife's freedom of action. Hamer's comprehensive study reveals that under the Old Testament economy, a wife already had divorce grounds more broadly based than those of her husband. The logic of Exodus 21:10–11 not only granted this, but also reveals that 1 Corinthians 7:15 is neither a 'Pauline privilege' nor an additional ground for divorce introduced by Paul, as I once argued. Paul is merely articulating Old Testament principles.

Hamer's appeal to marital imagery throughout Scripture and how it informs our understanding of the New Testament teaching on divorce and remarriage is brilliant. There are pastoral implications as well, though not directly addressed in this study. Simply put, at issue is how does one become 'one flesh' with another? Is it by a sexual act or by means of a conditional, volitional covenant? Hamer shows that it is the latter. So a woman becomes one flesh with her husband—a member of his family; a believer becomes one flesh with Christ—a member of Christ's body; and an unbeliever is one flesh with a 'prostitute'—which Hamer explains represents membership of the unbelieving world (as in Rev. 17–21)—all by means of a covenant. This clarifies in particular the marriage relationship. To say, for example, Jesus teaches that marriage is 'more binding' than his contemporaries taught should not focus our attention on the impossibility of 'breaking' a near indissoluble bond formed by sexual union. Instead, our focus should be on covenant commitments, on loyal love, on mutual responsibilities, on integrity, on ethical living, and on the maintenance and care of spouses and children (cf. Exod. 21:10–11; Eph. 5:25–29) in accordance with the character of a life lived with the desire to please God.

This study builds on the work of Instone-Brewer and, in my view, confirms it. At a time when the Church of Rome is re-thinking its understanding of divorce and remarriage perhaps those of us not within that faith community should be doing the same. Hamer only briefly touches on the pastoral issues raised, so it is for those with pastoral responsibilities to work out in practice the implications of the exegesis of the New Testament divorce and remarriage passages contained here. I hope it is widely read.

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Preface by the Author

It can only be imagined that when the New Testament writers made their (albeit brief) comments on divorce and remarriage that they assumed they would be understood. So what has gone wrong?

In the years after the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 C.E., when Graeco-Roman culture was at its height, the Jewish perspective of marriage and divorce, and thus the context of those brief New Testament comments was lost. The Christian church of that era was influenced by the neoplatonic ideas of the day, and an idealised concept of marriage developed from Adam and Eve’s marriage recorded in Genesis 2:23—it was love at first sight, a marriage made in heaven. These concepts frame an understanding of marriage in much of Western culture even today.

However, that was never the understanding of ancient Israel. Instead they looked to Genesis 2:24: ‘Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh’—so a naturally born man chooses a wife for himself, and their union was based on a ‘covenant’—in other words an agreement. The Old Testament makes it clear what the basis of that agreement was. Furthermore, it is clear, if that agreement was broken, there could be a divorce and a remarriage. All the Bible’s marital imagery (where the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures *imagine* that God is married to his people) is based on that understanding of human marriage.

But so strong is our concept of marriage, that when Genesis 2:24 is referred to in the New Testament, it is thought that the reference is to Adam and Eve’s marriage. It is a paradigmatic marriage that for many excludes (or greatly restricts) the possibility of divorce and remarriage.

This study looks to challenge that paradigm—and to suggest that the New Testament writers would not have employed an imagery which had at its centre divorce and remarriage, only to deny the possibility of such in their own human marriage teaching.

Colin Hamer

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Introduction

For millennia scholarship has sought to solve the enigmatic difficulties of Judeo-Christian divorce and remarriage teaching with little consensus.¹ This study investigates the possibility that the metaphoric marital imagery employed in the Jewish and Christian Scriptures—where Yahweh is portrayed as the husband of Israel, and Jesus as the bridegroom of the church—may provide paradigmatic and hermeneutic guidelines for a better understanding of the New Testament’s teaching concerning divorce and remarriage.

It will be suggested in the course of the study that mundane marriage (i.e. non-miraculous human marriage) in those Scriptures is demonstrated to be a volitional, conditional, covenantal union and that such is underpinned by the aetiology of marriage outlined in Genesis 2:24, which was understood in ancient Israel to delineate marriage as a metaphoric (i.e. non-literal) one-flesh union of a naturally born man and woman: ‘Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.’²

It will be seen that this aetiology of mundane marriage—which embraced the possibility of divorce and remarriage—was exploited by the Old Testament prophets to explain the relationship between Yahweh and Israel, and by the writers of the New Testament to explain the relationship between Christ and the church.³ Both the Jewish and Christian Scriptures see that those things which characterise mundane marriage (the source domain) also characterise the relationship between God and his people (the target domain): in metaphoric terms the source domain is ‘mapped’ to the target domain.

In contrast, the non-volitional, literal, one-flesh marriage union of the miraculous primal couple (Adam and Eve) described in Genesis 2:23—‘Then the man said, “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man”’—does not appear to be employed in the metaphoric marital imagery of those Scriptures, or as a model for mundane marriage.

In chapter 1 I outline cross-domain mapping principles, where concepts from a source domain are attributed to a target domain. It will be seen that in order for metaphoric imagery to be meaningful to its intended audience, the source domain has to be rooted in a social reality. The chapter considers the different conceptual domains of Genesis 2:23 and Genesis 2:24, and suggests that it was the Genesis 2:24 marriage which underpinned not only the marital practices of ancient Israel, but it is that marriage which forms the source domain of the cross-mapping, and so Genesis 2:24 forms the basis of all the Bible’s marital imagery.

In chapter 2 I will review the literature on Old Testament and New Testament marital imagery, and divorce and remarriage teaching in the New Testament. Here it is noteworthy that while the analysis of metaphoric imagery in the Old Testament is well-served in the literature, there is only a limited amount of published material addressing the New Testament imagery.

In addition, my literature review will show that New Testament scholars in their exegesis of the New Testament marriage and divorce pericopae (on the basis of a literal understanding of 1 Corinthians 6:15–16), have redefined the Genesis 2:24 one-flesh marriage as an irreversible ontological union, formed by coitus, not by covenant. This in turn appears to have led, in the literature, to the aetiology of the two marriages in Genesis 2:23 and Genesis 2:24 being conflated. It follows from this that the New Testament, when referencing Genesis 2:24, is seen as affirming the miraculous primal couple as the marriage model for marriage; a model that is seen to preclude, or at least greatly restrict, the possibility of divorce and/or remarriage.

In chapter 3 I shall outline my methodology for handling the biblical text.

¹ See: John Jr. Witte, *From Sacrament to Contract: Marriage, Religion, and Law in the Western Tradition*, 2nd ed. (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2012), pp. 2–15; also: David Instone-Brewer, *Divorce and Remarriage in the Bible: The Social and Literary Context* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), pp. 238–67

² Unless otherwise stated all Bible quotations are from the anglicized ESV (London: Collins, 2002).

³ In the main *Old Testament* will be the preferred terminology for the Jewish Scriptures rather than Hebrew Bible unless the reference is to the Masoretic Text.

To understand biblical marital imagery it is necessary to understand the source domain that has been cross-mapped. Since there is no systematic teaching in the Old Testament on marriage or divorce, I will in chapter 4 examine other texts relating to marriage and divorce from the ANE in order to elucidate the marital practices of ancient Israel.

Then in chapter 5 I will examine legislation and narratives concerning marriage and divorce in the Old Testament itself. It will be demonstrated that mundane marriage in ancient Israel embraced the concept of divorce and remarriage—few exegetes would disagree.

My reflection on Old Testament marital imagery in chapter 6 will reveal (as metaphor theory would suggest) that the social reality of mundane marriage—as practised and understood in ancient Israel—was mapped on to a target domain of *Yahweh: The Husband of Israel*. It follows that the divine marriage closely mirrors marital practice in ancient Israel, and that both embrace the concept of divorce and remarriage.

Next, in chapter 7, I survey the literature of the Second Temple period to see if there was a concept of a primal couple marriage aetiology in New Testament times. It will be suggested such a marriage model gives rise to the distinctive teaching that in mundane marriage there should be no polygyny or divorce; coitus is considered to be primarily for procreation; celibacy and holiness are linked; and each mundane marriage is believed to have a supernatural dimension. The chapter will demonstrate that there is only limited evidence of discussion in the Second Temple literature of such a marriage.

I continue my survey of the Second Temple period in chapter 8—this time focusing principally on the Judaean Desert Documents (JDD) which were published in the second half of the 20th century. It is believed by several scholars that these accurately reflect marital practices at a time contemporary with the redaction of the New Testament. Yet evidence is lacking for a primal couple marriage model in either the Jewish or the Graeco-Roman world of the day. The limited theorising about Adam and Eve's marriage forming an *archetype* for mundane marriage (which is found in the Second Temple literature) seems to have been confined to that: the marital practices of Palestine in the first century C.E. appear to be similar to those of ancient Israel.

The evidence presented in chapters 7 and 8 militates against an understanding that Adam and Eve's marriage forms the source domain of New Testament marital imagery—such a marriage was not part of the social reality which was available to be cross-mapped in the metaphoric marital imagery.

Chapter 9 discusses New Testament marital imagery and demonstrates how the focus of the divine marital imagery in the Gospels and Apocalypse is on a new conceptual domain: *Jesus: The Bridegroom of the Church*. In the imagery Jesus offers a marriage betrothal both to the Gentiles and divorced Israel. This adds further weight to the understanding that the primal couple's marriage cannot form the source domain of New Testament imagery: Adam and Eve's marriage does not have the characteristics required to achieve cross-mapping to such a target—for example, they had no betrothal period and neither of them were divorcees. Instead, the imagery of the Gospels and Apocalypse utilises contemporary mundane marriage—the social reality evidenced in the JDD—as its source domain. Indeed, it may be observed that if a primal couple marriage model is thought to undergird the New Testament's teaching on marriage and divorce (which many exegetes see as precluding the possibility of divorce and/or remarriage), then we encounter the problem of the New Testament authors employing marriage imagery which embraces concepts that are repudiated by their own mundane marriage teaching.

Finally in chapter 10 I will seek to find an exegesis of the New Testament marriage and divorce pericopae consistent with the analysis of the imagery in chapter 9. In other words, I will seek an exegesis of the New Testament's mundane marriage teaching concerning divorce and remarriage that is congruent with the New Testament's own marital imagery.

Summary

It is suggested that the marital imagery in both the Jewish and Christian Scriptures employs the same covenantal, metaphoric one-flesh marital principles found in Genesis 2:24. This 'source domain' then populates both Jewish and Christian ideas of the divine marriage—two 'target domains.' Metaphoric principles would imply that those Scriptures would teach an aetiology of mundane marriage congruent with their own imagery—an imagery which embraces the concept of divorce and remarriage—and hence it should be possible to find an exegesis of the disputed New Testament divorce and remarriage pericopae which is consonant with such a proposition.

It does not appear that such a study has been attempted previously. Furthermore, no published study appears to have challenged the widely assumed primal couple marriage model; or explored how the conceptual domains of Genesis 2:23 and Genesis 2:24 differ and the significance of that difference; or examined New Testament marital imagery in light of either traditional metaphor theory or the more recent developments in structure-mapping theory; or in light of that structure-mapping theory, how Genesis 2:24—with its metaphoric, covenantal concepts—is cross-mapped in both the Jewish and Christian Scriptures.

Chapter 1: Cross-Domain Mapping and Genesis 2:24

1.1 Cross-Domain Mapping

1.1.1 Metaphor Theory

Cross-domain mapping is a development of metaphor theory. A metaphor is when 'A' is declared to be 'B' when this is not literally true—a New Testament example is Jesus' claim recorded in John's gospel: 'I am the door' (John 10:9). Lakoff and Johnson say 'The essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another.'⁴ Kennedy believes that metaphor is the '*greatest resource for the forceful expression of original thought*'; and Caird that, 'All, or almost all, of the language used by the Bible to refer to God is metaphor' and that comparison 'comprises . . . almost all the language of theology.'⁵

Aristotle is perceived to have been the first to recognise that metaphors are a cognitive linguistic instrument but his insights were not re-visited until Richards, who identified a metaphor as consisting of a 'tenor' and a 'vehicle.'⁶ The vehicle 'carries over' characteristics (hence μεταφέρω from the Greek 'to carry over') to the tenor (from the Latin *teneo* 'to hold'); thus in 'I am the door' the vehicle is the door that carries over characteristics to Jesus, the tenor, the complete statement forming the metaphor. Although not literally true a metaphor seeks to convey a truth, often such being left to the reader to surmise.

An Old Testament example of the metaphoric A is B statement is in Psalm 23:1: 'The LORD is my shepherd'—the 'LORD' is the tenor, the 'shepherd' is the vehicle that accomplishes the transfer. It can be seen that the vehicle has to be a known entity to achieve a meaningful transfer: thus in the metaphoric A is B, 'A' (the tenor) is often a more abstract concept that is declared to be 'B' (the vehicle), a tangible entity employed to illustrate the tenor. Kennedy posits that: 'much can be learned about a speaker's assumptions and about his understanding of his audience from his choice and use of [the vehicle of the] metaphor.'⁷

McFague states: 'metaphorical thinking constitutes the basis of human thought and language. From the time we are infants we construct our world through metaphor'; and that, '*metaphorical theology* is indigenous to Christianity.'⁸ She continues: 'some metaphors gain wide appeal and become major ways of structuring and ordering experience' and from them emerge 'models' which:

are similar to metaphors in that they are images which retain the tension of the "is and is not" ... "God the father" ... is a metaphor which has become a model. As a model it not only retains characteristics of metaphor but also reaches towards qualities of conceptual thought. It suggests a comprehensive, ordering structure with impressive interpretive potential. As a rich model with many associated commonplaces as well as a host of supporting metaphors, an entire theology can be worked out from this model.⁹

Macky suggests that Black's work on metaphor is seminal, in that it embraces what he calls an 'interaction' view, whereby the vehicle not only organises the reader's view of the tenor, but has the potential to change their view of both. He points out that metaphors can be used as models which facilitate the observation of new connections. He gives specific examples of their use in science (for example, how electricity can be metaphorically portrayed as a fluid), and considers how they 'were conceived to be more than expository or

⁴ George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago, 1980), p. 5 emphasis/italics will be as per the original in all quotes.

⁵ George A. Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina, 1984), p. 26; George B. Caird, *The Language and Imagery of the Bible* (London: Duckworth, 1980), pp. 18, 144

⁶ Thus: Mary Gerhart and Allan Melvin Russell, *Metaphoric Process: The Creation of Scientific and Religious Understanding* (Fort Worth, TX: Texas Christian University, 1984), pp. 97–101; also Macky, 'Richards ... provided the impetus to the modern study of metaphor' in Peter Macky, *The Centrality of Metaphors to Biblical Thought: A Method for Interpreting the Bible* (Lewiston, N.Y.: Edwin Mellen, 1990), p. 5; I. A. Richards, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* (New York, N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 1936), pp. 96–97

⁷ Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation*, p. 26

⁸ Sallie McFague, *Metaphorical Theology: Models of God in Religious Language* (Philadelphia, Pa.: Fortress, 1982), pp. 14–15

⁹ McFague, *Metaphorical Theology*, p. 23

heuristic devices.¹⁰ *Contra* Davidson who—whilst acknowledging that he is arguing against the contemporary consensus, and accepting that metaphors might ‘lead us to notice what might not otherwise be noticed’—claims that ‘metaphors mean what the words, in their most literal interpretation mean, and nothing more.’¹¹

To this, Black replies:

To think of God *as* love and to take the further step of identifying the two is emphatically to do something more than to *compare* them as merely being alike in certain respects. But what that “something more” is remains tantalizingly elusive: we lack an adequate account of metaphorical thought.¹²

Similarly Glucksberg—exploring the difference between simile and metaphor—suggests that when a metaphor is converted to a simile (‘the LORD is like my shepherd’), the conceptual process is changed, albeit in an intangible way, and so comments that the ‘issue is as yet unresolved.’¹³ Thus there is an element of mystery in every metaphor in that it is not clear how the mind processes them. But what is clear is that the process effects a change, not in the elements of the metaphor, but in our perception; and if Black’s ‘interaction’ theory is correct, it has the potential to change our perception of both vehicle and tenor. Consequently that perception, as Lakoff and Johnson point out, becomes our new, albeit subjective, reality.¹⁴

Hence although the metaphoric ‘electricity is a fluid’ describes a way in which electricity can be conceived, it does not alter the way in which electricity functions; it is only our perception of electricity that has been changed by the metaphoric concept. In the metaphoric ‘I am the door’ (John 10:9), and ‘this [bread] is my body’ (Matt. 26:26; Luke 22:19), an ordinary door and ordinary bread are employed as vehicles to illustrate the nature of Jesus’ mission and body respectively; these mundane metaphoric vehicles each illustrate a more abstract and mysterious tenor. Notwithstanding any Christian confessional position, metaphor theory does not postulate an actual change in the properties of the metaphoric vehicle or tenor—the metaphor’s aim is to illustrate, to make new connections, to change the reader’s perception.

But metaphors, instead of elucidating meaning, can sometimes obscure it. The ‘I am the door’ of John 10:9 is part of an explanation following a series of metaphoric expressions about a shepherd and a sheepfold, used by Jesus in a discourse with the Jews. The Gospel writer comments, ‘This figure of speech Jesus used with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them’ (John 10:6). The use of additional metaphoric expressions to explain the original ones in the pericope serves to underline Caird’s point (noted earlier) about the ubiquity of metaphors in theological language.

Notice also Jesus’ instruction to ‘Watch and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees’ (Matt. 16:6), which from the explanation in v. 12 seems to portray the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees as having the potential to insidiously pervade one’s mind. Here again a tangible and familiar element (how leaven permeates bread) is employed as the vehicle to illustrate a more abstract concept and heighten the disciples’ awareness of it. Even so, such is the opacity of the metaphor that Jesus’ warning brought only the confused response from the disciples: ‘we brought no bread’ (Matt. 16:7). It can be seen how the understanding of a metaphor can lead to a difference of opinion for subsequent exegetes, as history demonstrates has happened with Jesus’ ‘this [bread] is my body.’

In addition, metaphors can lose the tension of their false literalism, and the metaphoric statement is then thought of as a literal statement. As an example of this, Gerhart and Russell cite, ‘our Father in heaven’ (Matt.

¹⁰ Macky, *The Centrality of Metaphors*, p. 1; Max Black, *Models and Metaphors: Studies in Language and Philosophy* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University, 1962), pp. 30–47, 226–29

¹¹ Donald Davidson, ‘What Metaphors Mean,’ in Sheldon Sacks (ed.), *On Metaphor* (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago, 1978), pp. 30, 39

¹² Max Black, ‘How Metaphors Work: A Reply to Donald Davidson,’ in Sheldon Sacks (ed.), *On Metaphor* (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago, 1978), p. 192

¹³ Sam Glucksberg, ‘How Metaphors Create Categories - Quickly,’ in Raymond W. Gibbs Jr. (ed.), *The Cambridge Handbook of Metaphor and Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 80–81

¹⁴ Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors*, p. 146

6:9), claiming that the ‘death’ of this metaphor has given rise to an unwarranted patriarchy.¹⁵ Hence identifying a metaphor and its constituent parts is a process vital to the unravelling of the author’s meaning, even if uncertainties remain.

1.1.2 Large-Scale Conceptual Metaphors

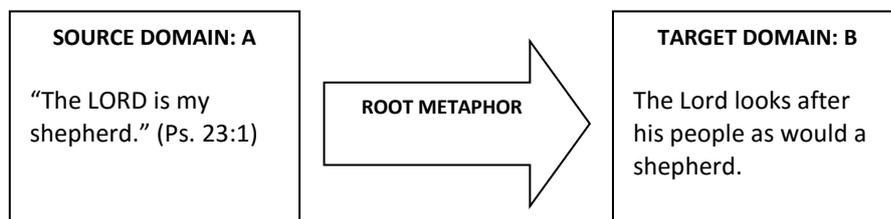
Fauconnier and Turner suggest that metaphor theory has previously focused on ‘pair-wise bindings’ (where ‘A’ is said to be ‘B’) but since the 1970s some metaphor theorists, for example Gentner and Bowdle, would describe large-scale conceptual metaphors (which McFague, Black, et al. might describe as models) as structure-mapping, and which Masson describes as cross-domain mapping.¹⁶ Structure-mapping theorists, rather than employing the traditional terminology of vehicle and tenor, prefer to speak of cross-mapping from one conceptual domain to another. Thus Gerhart and Russell see that the pair-wise metaphoric statement, which Ricoeur described as the *root metaphor*, creates a new conceptual domain.¹⁷ Their illustration of a root metaphor is a person in their unlit attic looking for a stored item when a flash of lightning reveals the whereabouts of not just the item but everything stored there—thus they describe the root metaphor as an ‘ontological flash.’¹⁸

An example of such source to target cross-domain mapping is found in Psalm 23. The *root metaphor* which opens the new conceptual domain is ‘the LORD is my shepherd.’ The consequent new field of meaning—that God is like a shepherd to his people—allows the Psalmist to cross-map consequent metaphoric expressions from source to target. For example: ‘he makes me lie down by green pastures ... your rod and staff they comfort me.’

Masson points out because of advances in metaphor research in the last two decades the details of theoretical schemes developed will inevitably change; it seems one symptom of this is that linguists are not agreed on the distinction between metaphor and analogy.¹⁹ This present study will follow Gerhart and Russell who see that analogies transfer the properties from one thing to another (as in a scale model) but leave the world of meanings undistorted:

There is a sense in which analogies are found—they do exist or do not exist. Metaphors, by contrast, are created ... The metaphoric act distorts a world of meanings in such a way as to make possible an analogical relationship between one known and another known, an analogical relationship that was not possible before the metaphoric distortion took place ... The discovery of an analogy between two knowns is not an epistemological act that changes either knowledge or the world of meanings.²⁰

The root metaphor: ‘The LORD is my shepherd,’ with some example analogies consequent on its employment, might be diagrammatically imagined like this:



¹⁵ Gerhart and Russell, *Metaphoric Process*, pp. 116–17

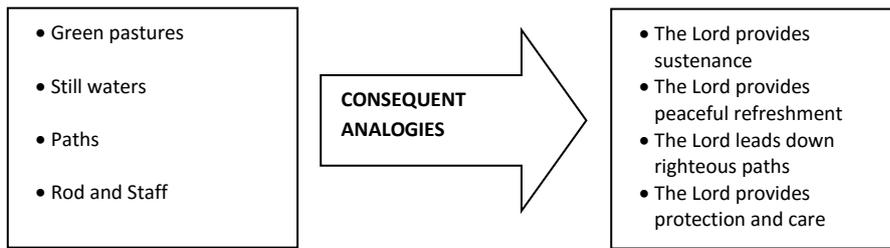
¹⁶ Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner, ‘Rethinking Metaphor,’ in Raymond W. Gibbs Jr. (ed.), *The Cambridge Handbook of Metaphor and Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 53; Dedre Gentner and Brian Bowdle, ‘Metaphor as Structure-Mapping,’ in Raymond W. Gibbs Jr. (ed.), *The Cambridge Handbook of Metaphor and Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 109. Robert Masson, *Without Metaphor, No Saving God: Theology after Cognitive Linguistics*, SPT 54 (Leuven: Peeters, 2014), p. 111

¹⁷ Ricoeur says, ‘root metaphors ... have the ability to engender conceptual diversity ... an unlimited number of potential interpretations at a conceptual level ... They are the dominant metaphors capable of both engendering and organizing a network’: Paul Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning* (Fort Worth, TX: Texas Christian University, 1976), p. 64

¹⁸ Gerhart and Russell, *Metaphoric Process*, pp. 113–14

¹⁹ Masson, *Without Metaphor*, pp. 111, 129–61

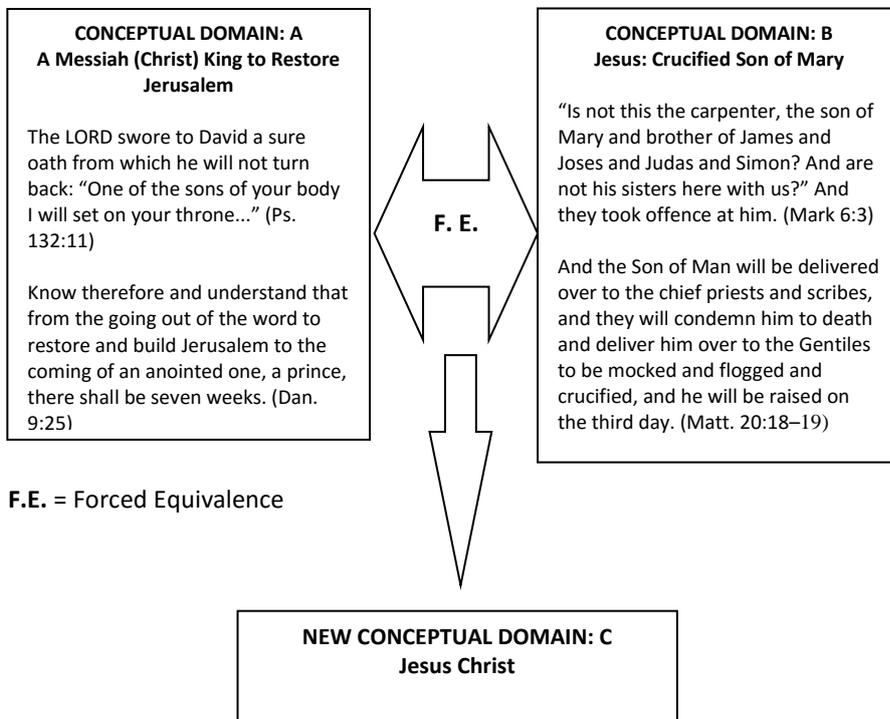
²⁰ Gerhart and Russell, *Metaphoric Process*, pp. 113, 119–20



Gentner and Bowdle describe the process as an extended analogical structure-mapping between domains: ‘Once the alignment is made, further candidate inferences are spontaneously projected from base to target.’²¹ It is possible that some analogies are not articulated—an example is Psalm 23 where the reader is expected to understand that God’s people are (metaphorically) sheep even though this is not referenced.

Masson points out that cross-mapping can be from a source domain to a new target domain (as in Psalm 23), or that two existing conceptual domains can be mapped on to each other by means of the pair-wise metaphoric statement; the consequent merging of the two domains giving rise to a third concept that leaves behind the original two in a ‘tectonic reconfiguration.’ His analogy is that of two tectonic plates colliding which results in a change in the landscape, and cites as an example, ‘Jesus is the Messiah,’ where a victorious king of Israel and a crucified son of a carpenter become one in ‘Jesus Christ,’ having been merged in a ‘forced equivalence’—making possible ‘logical moves otherwise unavailable.’²²

Diagrammatically, such a forced-equivalence cross-mapping between two existing conceptual domains to create a new third domain might be perceived thus:



²¹ Gentner and Bowdle, ‘Metaphor,’ in Gibbs, *The Cambridge Handbook*, pp. 109–10

²² Masson, *Without Metaphor*, pp. 59–68, 186; also: Mary Gerhart and Allan Melvin Russell, *New Maps for Old: Explorations in Science and Religion* (London: Continuum, 2001), pp. 45–60

1.1.3 Cross-Domain Mapping and Theology Today

Since the 1970s cognitive mapping has emerged as a distinct interdisciplinary field of study and there is now a rapidly expanding corpus of literature exploring and applying the concepts of metaphor theory and the associated cross-domain mapping to a wide range of academic disciplines.²³

However, Masson's perception is that:

Recent developments in understanding ... in the interdisciplinary field of cognitive linguistics provide fresh ground for rethinking how God and religious beliefs are conceptualized ... While research groups of the Society of Biblical Literature in recent years have devoted some attention to the implications of metaphor theory in cognitive linguistics for the interpretation of ancient texts, this research has only just begun to reach the broader public ... These challenges of cognitive linguistics' to standard accounts of metaphor and figurative language have not been seriously addressed in theology and religious studies—indeed, have hardly been noted except for some recent work in biblical hermeneutics.²⁴

His observation appears to be supported by the fact that although *The Cambridge Handbook of Metaphor and Thought* has 28 articles from 'distinguished scholars from different academic fields'—including science, law, mathematics, psychoanalysis, music, and art—theology is not represented.²⁵

1.2 The One-Flesh Unions of Genesis 2:23 and 2:24

It will be suggested in this present study that the one-flesh union described in Genesis 2:24 is employed in the Bible's marital imagery, and in its associated corporate body imagery, to build five large-scale conceptual metaphors. Although as we shall see, in the literature review of chapter 2, it appears that the two one-flesh unions described in Genesis 2:23 and 2:24 respectively have been conflated in the minds of many scholars, the two verses nevertheless underpin two quite distinct conceptual domains.

Genesis 2:23–24 states:

[23] וַיֹּאמֶר הָאֱדָם זֹאת הַפֶּעַם עֵצָם מֵעֵצָמִי וּבָשָׂר מִבָּשָׂרִי לְזֹאת יִקְרָא אִשָּׁה כִּי מֵאִישׁ לִקְחָהּ זֹאת

[24] עַל־כֵּן יַעֲזֹב־אִישׁ אֶת־אָבִיו וְאֶת־אִמּוֹ וְדָבַק בְּאִשְׁתּוֹ וְהָיוּ לְבָשָׂר אֶחָד

[23] Then the man said, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man."

[24] Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

In v. 23 it seems that Adam is expressing satisfaction that—after being presented with all the animals, and yet still not finding a suitable helper (vv. 18–20)—he at last has another human with whom he can relate (vv. 21–23). But in the expression, 'This at last (זֹאת הַפֶּעַם) is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh,' Anderson sees the use of the article ה (which has the force of a demonstrative pronoun) as significant, since another demonstrative pronoun זאת ('this') is also appended to the phrase, emphasising the uniqueness of the occasion. He states: 'Targum Neophyti and Ps.-Jonathan clarify what is so emphatically important and novel about this occasion. "This time *and never again will a woman be created from a man as this one was created from me*" (italics = midrashic explanation).' Anderson goes on to cite the Abot de Rabbi Nathan, which states: 'This one time God acted as groomsman for Adam; from now on he must get one himself.'²⁶ Whatever the strength of the grammatical argument, the Old Testament does not record any further miraculous unions and

²³ Masson, *Without Metaphor*, pp. 10–11; Fauconnier and Turner, 'Rethinking,' in Gibbs, *The Cambridge Handbook*, p. 53; Raymond W. Gibbs Jr. (ed.), *The Cambridge Handbook of Metaphor and Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 5

²⁴ Masson, *Without Metaphor*, pp. 4, 7, 16

²⁵ Gibbs, *The Cambridge Handbook*, p. 5

²⁶ Gary Anderson, 'Celibacy or Consummation in the Garden? Reflections on Early Jewish and Christian Interpretations of the Garden of Eden,' *HTR* 82/2 (1989), pp. 125–26

the pattern of marriage subsequently was that the man and woman were born naturally of their own parents and not miraculously formed by God.

Verse 24 is either a comment by the author introduced into the story or a later editorial gloss;²⁷ Kaye commenting that rabbinic interest centred on whether or not it reflected a matrilineal family structure in Jewish history.²⁸ But having reviewed the evidence for the idea that Hebrew patriarchy was preceded by a more remote matriarchal regime, Mace concludes, 'such a view is now entirely out of the question.'²⁹ It is more probable that, as Loader observes, the 'leaving' of father and mother indicates a 'new social reality, the beginning of a new household.'³⁰

It is suggested the nature of the Genesis 2:24 one-flesh union is key to understanding the aetiology of mundane marriage and the Bible's marital imagery. It seems clear that the union of Genesis 2:24, unlike that of Genesis 2:23, is not a literal one-flesh union—there is no miraculous (or mystical) union of the flesh suggested in the verse, nor any evidence in the Old Testament record that this was how mundane marriage was later understood. We are told that the couple 'shall become one flesh' (וְהָיוּ לְבָשָׂר אֶחָד) thus, unlike Adam and Eve, their 'one flesh' status is a construct of their union, not a pre-existing state. This concept appears to be underpinned by the Hebrew. Verse 23 has the phrase בָּשָׂר מִבְּשָׂרִי employing the inseparable preposition מ (‘from’) and thus might be translated as ‘flesh from my flesh’ as per the ISV (even though most Bible versions opt for ‘flesh of my flesh’ which would normally require a construct phrase). This can be contrasted with v. 24 where the inseparable preposition ל (‘into’) is used (לְבָשָׂר)—thus Eve was formed *from* Adam (v. 23), whereas the mundane marriage couple come *into* their one-flesh union (v. 24).³¹

Loader suggests: 'בשר' ('flesh') can be used metaphorically in the Hebrew for one's own kin or family.'³² Similarly, Instone-Brewer comments that in ancient Israel: "they shall be one flesh" would probably have been interpreted to mean "they shall be one family."³³ Skinner points out that in both Hebrew and Arabic, the word 'flesh' is synonymous with clan or kindred group, and he references Leviticus 25:49 where ESV translates בָּשָׂר ('flesh') as 'clan'.³⁴

Kaye states:

The term "flesh and bone" occurs only eight times in the Old Testament apart from Genesis 2:23. In Genesis 29:14 and 37:27 it directly and clearly means someone who is a close blood relation ... In general terms, the phrase has the immediate and direct sense of blood relation but, as well, is used figuratively of a close relationship.³⁵

McCarthy clarifies the situation when he says a covenant was 'the means the ancient world took to extend relationships beyond the natural unity by blood.'³⁶ Holland considers the various understandings of בָּשָׂר in the

²⁷ Tosato sees it as a postexilic gloss: Angelo Tosato, 'On Genesis 2:24,' *CBQ* 52 no. 3 (1990), p. 406

²⁸ Bruce Kaye, "'One Flesh' and Marriage,' *Colloq* 2 (May 1990), p. 49

²⁹ David. R. Mace, *Hebrew Marriage: A Sociological Study* (London: Epworth, 1953), pp. 76–82.

³⁰ William R. G. Loader, *Making Sense of Sex: Attitudes towards Sexuality in Early Jewish and Christian Literature* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2013), p. 12; Gehring suggests the husband 'forsakes' rather than leaves: René Gehring, *The Biblical 'One Flesh' Theology of Marriage as Constituted in Genesis 2: 24* (Eugene, Oreg.: Wipf and Stock, 2013), pp. 22–24; also: Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15* (Nashville, Tenn.: Word, 1987), p. 70

³¹ I am grateful to David Instone-Brewer for drawing my attention to this aspect of the Hebrew grammar of Gen. 2:23–24.

³² William R. G. Loader, *The New Testament on Sexuality* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2012), p. 278

³³ Instone-Brewer, *Divorce and Remarriage*, p. 22

³⁴ John Skinner, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Genesis* (ICC; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1930), p. 70

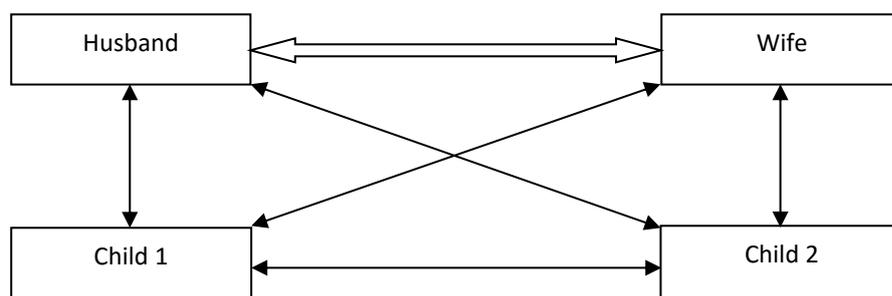
³⁵ He cites: Gen. 29:14; 37:27; 2 Sam. 5:1; 19:12, 13; 1 Chr. 11:1; Neh. 5:5 and Job 2:5. Kaye, 'One Flesh,' pp. 48–49

³⁶ Dennis J. McCarthy, *Treaty and Covenant: A Study in Form in the Ancient Oriental Documents and in the Old Testament* (AB 21; Rome: Biblical Institute, 1963), p. 175. Hugenberger sees the predominant meaning of covenant (בְּרִית) in biblical Hebrew is 'an elected, as opposed to natural, relationship of obligation established under divine sanction.' The marriage agreement is often referred to as a 'covenant' by New Testament scholars, and this study will use that same terminology, but in so doing it is not intended to endorse any later connotations of such, or an understanding (*contra* Hugenberger), that it was deemed a contract endorsed or witnessed under divine sanction (see §5.3): Gordon P. Hugenberger, *Marriage as a Covenant: Biblical Law and Ethics as Developed from Malachi* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1994), pp. 171, 216–79

Hebrew Bible and sees that a covenantal concept is contained in its semantic field: ‘Here [Gen. 2:24] “flesh,” implies the covenant relationship a man has with his wife.’³⁷ Thus the one-flesh union of Genesis 2:24 is a covenantal *one-family* union: husband and wife are now perceived to be ‘kin’—the family is a cohesive unit.

It will be seen in the course of this study that marriages in ancient Israel were formed by means of a volitional, conditional covenant, such being either understood—or articulated orally, or in writing. When the agreement was made, the bride, usually after a betrothal period, would leave her family and become part of her husband’s family;³⁸ the process is symbolised in the West today when the bride often takes her husband’s family name.

The difference in a family with two birth children between the husband and wife relationship and that of the child/sibling relationships can be diagrammatically represented thus:



The parent/child/sibling relationships are blood relationships (i.e. consanguineous) and occupy the same conceptual domain as that of Adam and Eve, in that these relationships are (and always were) one flesh—they are non-volitional, non-covenantal, and permanent—a reality, not a construct. In contrast, the Genesis 2:24 one-flesh relationship between the husband and wife is a construct of a volitional, covenantal union; a construct which nevertheless brings the Old Testament prohibited degrees of affinity into force—that is, certain sexual relationships are now forbidden to the new family, as outlined in Leviticus chapters 18 and 20 (§5.6).

The ‘they shall become one flesh’ of Genesis 2:24 displays the false literalism of a metaphor and is capable of being analysed as such: two entities are said to equate—A (the couple) ‘is’ (or rather becomes) B (a one-flesh union), generating the tension that arises from the metaphoric distortion Gerhart and Russell allude to. It seems that the consanguineous familial one-flesh unions and the literal one-flesh union of the primal couple form the source domain of the metaphor that illustrates the target—the metaphoric mundane one-flesh marriage union. Thus the concept of a literal/consanguineous one-flesh relationship is *carried over* in the Genesis 2:24 metaphor to the husband and wife, and it is this metaphoric one-flesh/one-family covenantal relationship which underpins the aetiology of mundane marriage.

However, it will be seen that a widely held view by New Testament scholars is that Genesis 2:24 refers to a relationship created by a sexual union that has an ontological and/or mystical dimension.³⁹ This seems to be based on a literal understanding of 1 Corinthians 6:15–16 where it is believed that Paul is referencing sexual intercourse with a prostitute.⁴⁰ It will be suggested that such an interpretation fails to identify Paul’s

³⁷ Tom Holland, *Romans: The Divine Marriage* (Eugene, Oreg.: Wipf and Stock, 2011), p. 203; for further discussion: §1.4.3 and §1.4.4.

³⁸ Daniel I. Block, ‘Marriage and Family in Ancient Israel,’ in Ken M. Campbell (ed.), *Marriage and Family in the Biblical World* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2003), p. 58

³⁹ For example: Loader, *The New Testament on Sexuality*, pp. 170, 172; Holland references others: Tom Holland, *Contours of Pauline Theology* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2004), pp. 124–39.

⁴⁰ The authorship of the Pauline epistles is not significant for this study (§3.2) and so an assumption of Pauline authorship will usually be made.

metaphoric imagery. Whatever the validity of this literal view of the Corinthians pericope it will be seen in the course of this study that the marital imagery of the Jewish and Christian Scriptures cross-maps the conceptual domain of Genesis 2:24 as understood in ancient Israel.

It might be argued that the Genesis author was not familiar with metaphoric concepts; however, Genesis 3:15 states:

I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.

In this metaphor, human conflict that results in physical injury is the vehicle illustrating the tenor of the imagery that portrays some future spiritual conflict. Similarly Genesis 4:7 utilises an animal as the vehicle to illustrate the nature of sin (the tenor): ‘if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it.’

Thus it is suggested that the one-flesh union outlined in Genesis 2:24 is cross-mapped from the conceptual domain occupied by the primal couple, the Genesis 2:24 relationship being a metaphoric restatement of that union. And rather than the literal (and therefore permanent) one-flesh union of the primal couple, it was the Genesis 2:24 metaphoric one-flesh union that was understood to be the basis of mundane marriage in the Old Testament. This metaphoric one-flesh union meant that the couple were now considered to be members of the same family, bringing relationships created by that union (which today in much of the English-speaking world would be described as ‘in-law’ and ‘step’) within the scope of prohibited sexual relationships.

The differences between the conceptual domains of the literal one-flesh relationship of the primal couple, and the one-flesh construct of mundane marriage, can be set out as below:

Genesis 2:23

1. A miraculous man and woman.
2. Remain as they are.
3. In a literal one-flesh union.
4. Without the need for a covenant.

Genesis 2:24

1. A naturally born man and woman.
2. Become what they were not.
3. In a metaphoric one-flesh union.
4. By a volitional, conditional covenant.

Wenham, reflecting the academic consensus and the conflation of the aetiology of marriage in the two verses, states that Genesis 2:24 ‘is a comment by the narrator applying the principles of the first marriage to every marriage’;⁴¹ however, it can be seen that the four principles of Genesis 2:24 outlined above are mutually exclusive to the principles underlying Genesis 2:23 and the first marriage described there. As articulated above, it will be seen that the Old Testament demonstrates that in ancient Israel the principles of Genesis 2:24, not those of Genesis 2:23, underpin the understanding of mundane marriage within that people group. This study will explore how these four principles of Genesis 2:24 are exploited in biblical marital imagery to show how naturally born men and women can become what they were not previously—part of a covenant community that in the imagery is the ‘wife’/‘bride’ of God—and how such might impact the understanding of New Testament teaching about divorce and remarriage.

1.3 The Cross-Domain Mapping of Genesis 2:24 in the Old Testament

It will be seen that the Old Testament marital imagery has many manifestations but that they are all part of one large-scale conceptual metaphor based on mundane marriage (the source domain), as outlined in Genesis 2:24, cross-mapped to a new conceptual domain: a defined people group being ‘married’ to their God.

⁴¹ Wenham, *Genesis*, p. 70