Introduction

Standard metaphor theory recognizes that the redistribution of linguistic resources in a text has the potential to construct, for readers, an alternative experience of the world. By necessity, these theories must appreciate how textual interpretation occurs in relation to other instances of language use. Systemic linguistic theory attempts to organize such instances into abstract meta-systems of meaning that are available to language users, such that the instance is comprehensible in relation to rejected systemic choices. Lemke has pushed this perspective further by investigating how communities enact linguistic (and thus social) identities through the typical semiotic formations they select or do not select. Metaphor, in the broadest of senses, relies on such intertextual contrast for its integration into human social activity. However, the semiotic formations, immediate within the social contexts of the ancient readers, are less obvious for modern interpreters. In that case, corpus linguistic techniques present themselves as an optimal means to clarify the linguistic environment in which the sender and receiver communicated.

In this essay, I will explore how contemporary interpreters of ancient texts can better understand how metaphor functions when a corpus linguistic analysis illumines the historic intertextual environment of the text. To do this, I will narrow my focus significantly to the use of the metaphor of “being rooted,” found in Col 2:7 and Eph 3:17, and the effect of this mode of communication. These are obvious examples of lexical metaphor, where the participle ἐρριζωμένοι contributes to a description of certain moral actions. This lexical choice coordinates with a larger scale redistribution of linguistic resources, including verbalization, adding contour and detail to the readers’ experiences of the letters. A corpus analysis of the ῥίζα family, utilizing lexical priming

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theory, reveals how these words are congruently and metaphorically deployed in discourse.

“Root” Metaphors in Colossians and Ephesians

Scholarly discussion of the “root” metaphor in Col 2:7 and Eph 3:17 has not been overly detailed, nor has it warranted any sort of controversial readings. However, the lack of in-depth treatment leaves space for fresh insights into these passages, in light of developments in metaphor theory. Discussion of the use of the “root” metaphor is occasionally present, but other issues often take precedence. For example, Best notes the apparently enigmatic presence of the nominative participial form rather than a genitive or dative. Even so, the metaphorical character of both passages is widely recognized. Of further interest among commentators is the literary relationship between Col 2:7 and Eph 3:17. The primary point of comparison is that the nominative participle ἐρριζωμένοι appears in some sort of metaphorical sense in both contexts. Discussion revolves around the use of botanical imagery, but this is not the only point of comparison. It appears as though the Pauline author “mixes” his metaphors in a similar way in Colossians and Ephesians. Other metaphorical domains occur as well, such as the ‘walking’ metaphor in Colossians. At

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4 O’Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, 106. Whether or not Paul is truly mixing his metaphors is a contentious issue. Several authors use the language of mixed metaphor, such as Markus Barth, *Ephesians: Introduction, Translation, and Commentary on Chapters 1–3* (AB 34; New