

DIEGO DY CARLOS ARAÚJO

Peacemaking  
through Blood  
in Colossians

*Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen  
zum Neuen Testament 2. Reihe*

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**Mohr Siebeck**

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Diego dy Carlos Araújo

# Peacemaking through Blood in Colossians

An Analysis of the Imagery in Its Graeco-Roman and  
Jewish Context

Mohr Siebeck

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## Preface

The present volume is an edited version of my PhD thesis, accepted by the London School of Theology in the summer of 2021. I am grateful to the editors of the second series of *Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament*, especially to professor Jörg Frey for accepting my manuscript for publication. Thanks also to Elena Müller, Dominika Zgolik, and the entire editorial staff of Mohr Siebeck for their helpful support during the production.

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Diego dy Carlos Araújo  
July 2024

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## Abbreviations

Abbreviations of biblical and other ancient writings follow the conventions in Billie Jean Collins et al., eds., *The SBL Handbook of Style: For Biblical Studies and Related Disciplines*, 2nd ed. (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2014) §8.3. Abbreviations of journals, series, and major reference works follow SBL Handbook, §8.4. Abbreviations of biblical editions and modern versions follow SBL Handbook, §8.2.1. The following abbreviations for series, grammatical or lexical resources, referenced in the text below, are provided here for the reader's convenience.

AJEC	Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity.
AJMS	Athens Journal of Mediterranean Studies.
AJPh	The American Journal of Philosophy.
BHGNT	Baylor Handbook on the Greek New Testament.
CCAW	Cambridge Companions to the Ancient World.
DOTP	Boda, Mark J. and J. G. McConville, eds. <i>Dictionary of the Old Testament: Prophets</i> (Downers Grove: IVP, 2012).
ECAM	Early Christianity in Asia Minor.
HABES	Heidelberger Althistorische Beiträge und Epigraphische Studien.
HTA	Historisch Theologische Auslegung.
JATS	Journal of the Adventist Theological Society.
NA28	Aland, Kurt, Barbara Aland, Johannes Karavidopoulos et al. <i>Novum Testamentum Graece</i> , 28th ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2012).
NCCS	New Covenant Commentary Series.
NDBT	Alexander, T. Desmond and Brian S. Rosner. <i>New Dictionary of Biblical Theology</i> (Downers Grove: IVP, 2000).
NIDNTTE	Silva, Moisés, ed. <i>New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis</i> , 5 vols., 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014).
PCPS	Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society.
PNTC	The Pillar New Testament Commentary.
SBLECL	Society of Biblical Literature Early Christianity and Its Literature.
THGNT	Jongkind, Dirk, Peter Williams, Peter Head et al. <i>The Greek New Testament</i> (Wheaton: Crossway, 2018).
ZECNT	Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament.



## Illustrations

- Figure 1: Matronly figure – panel from the exterior wall on the east side of the Ara Pacis Augustae (source: Miguel Hermoso Cuesta, Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 3.0).
- Figure 2: Roma – panel from the exterior wall on the east side of the Ara Pacis Augustae (Wikimedia Commons, Miguel Hermoso Cuesta, CC BY-SA 3.0).
- Figure 3: Ethnos of the Dalcians (source: Maia Kotrosits, 2010 CC BY-NC-SA 4.0).
- Figure 4: Claudius and Britannia (source: Maia Kotrosits, 2010 CC BY-NC-SA 4.0).
- Figure 5: Nero and Armenia (source: Maia Kotrosits, 2010 CC BY-NC-SA 4.0).



## Introduction

The “reconciliation of all things” in Colossians 1.20 has been the subject of one of the most extensive bodies of literature produced in New Testament studies. The text says, καὶ δι’ αὐτοῦ ἀποκαταλλάξαι τὰ πάντα εἰς αὐτόν, εἰρηνοποιήσας διὰ τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ σταυροῦ αὐτοῦ, δι’ αὐτοῦ εἶτε τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς εἶτε τὰ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς.<sup>1</sup> Despite the close connection between the metaphorical expressions ἀποκαταλλάξαι τὰ πάντα and εἰρηνοποιήσας διὰ τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ σταυροῦ αὐτοῦ,<sup>2</sup> the second phrase has received less attention. However, what happens if, instead of regarding Colossians 1.20b as say a “supporting actor” in the drama of God’s reconciling work in Colossians, we acknowledge the importance of its rhetorical place in this verse and inquire into the richness of its metaphorical expressions and the imagery it might have evoked in the minds of its hearers in first-century Colossae? In other words, how does “peacemaking through the blood of his cross” in Colossians 1.20b help us understand the message of reconciliation in the letter to the Colossians?

In this thesis, I address the question of how *tal through blood* (Col. 1.20b) was perceived by the audience of the letter to the Colossians as achieving the “reconciliation of all things” (Col. 1.20). My contention is that the uses of “blood” and “peacemaking” in Colossians should be understood against the specific socio-cultural backgrounds of both the Graeco-Roman community and the Jewish community which comprised the primary audience of this letter. In order to prove my hypothesis, I apply insights from Cognitive Linguistics (CL), especially from frame semantics and conceptual metaphor theory in order to assess the potential “frames” that were possibly triggered by the author’s use of the καταλασσ- word-group.

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<sup>1</sup> Greek quotes in this thesis are from the THGNT unless otherwise stated.

<sup>2</sup> I take εἰρηνοποιήσας as a participle of means, thus: [he] reconciled all things *by* making peace through the blood of his cross (e.g., Harris, Murray J. *Colossians and Philemon* [EGGNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991], 51).



## A. Literature Review<sup>3</sup>

Most commentators believe Colossians 1.15–20 to be part of earlier traditional material reused by the author of the letter.<sup>4</sup> The participial phrase εἰρηνοποιήσας διὰ τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ σταυροῦ αὐτοῦ in verse 20 is viewed by many as an editorial addition made to an earlier composition, thus either betraying Paul’s influence – for those who dispute Paul’s authorship – or representing Paul’s own editorial hand in a pre-formed “hymn” – for those who argue for Paul’s authorship.<sup>5</sup> However, either way, there is general agreement among commentators that, as the Poem stands,<sup>6</sup> the participial phrase elaborates the means by which the reconciliation of all things was achieved.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Because of the narrow focus of my research on the metaphorical expression εἰρηνοποιήσας διὰ τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ σταυροῦ αὐτοῦ (Col. 1.20b), I do not present here an assessment of the literature on “reconciliation” (ἀποκαταλλάξει τὰ πάντα, Col. 1.20) per se, either in Colossians or in the New Testament in general. Although the material inevitably intersects at times, the focus of this study is on the relevant material on the phrase εἰρηνοποιήσας διὰ τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ σταυροῦ αὐτοῦ. Bibliography on “reconciliation” can be found in most works cited here.

<sup>4</sup> For a concise helpful survey of the debate around the literary form of Colossians 1.15–20, see Gordley, Matthew E. *The Colossians Hymn in Context: An Exegesis in Light of Jewish and Greco-Roman Hymnic and Epistolary Conventions* (WUNT 228; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), 5–26.

<sup>5</sup> E.g., Käsemann, Ernst. “A primitive Christian Baptismal Liturgy,” in *Essays on New Testament Themes* (trans. W. J. Montague; London: SCM Press, 1964), 149–68, at 152; Lohse, Eduard. *A Commentary on the Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon* (trans. William R. Poehlmann and Robert J. Harris; Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971), 60, cf. n. 209; Lindemann, Andreas. *Der Kolosserbrief* (ZBK 10; Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1983), 25, 30f; Hübner, Hans. *An Philemon, an die Kolosser, an die Epheser* (HNT 12; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997), 56, 63; Wolter, Michael. *Der Brief an die Kolosser; Der Brief an Philemon* (ÖTK 12; Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1993), 74, 86; Schweizer, Edward. *The Letter to the Colossians: A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1982), 83f; MacDonald, Margaret Y. *Colossians and Ephesians* (SP 17; Collegeville: Liturgical, 2000), 66; Martin, Ralph. *Reconciliation: A Study of Paul’s Theology* (New Foundations Theological Library; Atlanta: John Knox, 1981), 114–17; cf. Idem, “Reconciliation and Forgiveness in the Letter to the Colossians,” in *Reconciliation and Hope* (ed. Robert Banks. Carlisle: The Paternoster Press, 1974), 104–24, at 113; Gnlika, Joachim. *Der Kolosserbrief* (HThKNT 10.1; Freiburg: Herder, 1980), 52–58; Pokorný, Petr. *Colossians: A Commentary* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1991), 60–62; Witherington III, Ben. *The Letters to Philemon, the Colossians, and the Ephesians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Captivity Epistles* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 131f.

<sup>6</sup> For convenience, I will refer to Col. 1.15–20 as *Poem*. I do not however believe this passage has all the formal properties of a poem, nor that of a hymn for that matter. Cf. Wright’s proposal on the form of the passage (Wright, N. T. “Poetry and Theology in Colossians 1.15–20,” *NTS* 36 [1990]: 444–68).

<sup>7</sup> *Pace* Schweizer, *Colossians*, 55–90, who, in an attempt to reconstruct a potential original hymn with a well-balanced symmetry, identified four editorial additions made by the

The majority of commentators do not address the significance of the possible imagery activated by the metaphorical expression “peacemaking through the blood of his cross” for the study of the background of reconciliation in Colossians. Many only go as far as to explore the background of either “peace/making peace” or “blood,” separately, or the phrase “blood of his cross” as a metonymy for Christ’s death.

Accordingly, some commentators see the Old Testament eschatological hope of  $\epsilon\iota\psi$  as the idea behind “making peace” in Colossians 1.20. For instance, Douglas Moo states that “[t]his language picks up the widespread Old Testament predication that in the last day God would establish universal *shalōm*, ‘peace,’ or ‘well-being;’”<sup>8</sup> and, “Colossians 1.20 teaches [...] ‘cosmic restoration’ or ‘renewal.’” The latter comment is based on the suggestion that “making peace” means “pacification” in the sense of “cosmic restoration.” Similarly, Eduard Lohse adduces Isaiah 11 in connection with “cosmic peace”

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author of Colossians (v. 16, “εἶτε θρόνοι εἶτε κυριότητες εἶτε ἀρχαὶ εἶτε ἐξουσίαι”; v. 18, “τῆς ἐκκλησίας,” and “ἵνα γένηται ἐν πᾶσιν αὐτὸς πρωτεύων;” v. 20, “εἰρηνοποιήσας διὰ τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ σταυροῦ αὐτοῦ”), whose purpose was to correct the theology of the original composition. Thus, in his view, the statement εἰρηνοποιήσας διὰ τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ σταυροῦ αὐτοῦ “clearly stands in contrast to that [reconciliation as being brought about by the indwelling of the fulness of God in Christ] (Schweizer, *Colossians*, 84); cf. Gordley, *Colossians Hymn*, 181–96. For an insightful concise analysis of Schweizer’s arguments, see Barth, Markus, and Helmut Blanke. *Colossians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (trans. Astrid B. Beck; AB 34B; New York: Doubleday, 1994), 227–36. All such attempts at reconstructing an original form of the “hymn” are necessarily subjective. Although such intellectual exercise may be valuable for the studies of Christian origins, in this work I will deal with the text as it stands for I am interested in the exegesis of the letter to the Colossians, which means that I am “assuming that its author believed his shaping of the text to be reasonable and that (at least some of) his readers would understand his intent.” (Hartman, Lars. “Universal Reconciliation,” *SNTSU* 10 (1985): 109–21, at 110; cf. n. 5). Cf. Stettler, Christian. *Der Kolosserhymnus: Untersuchungen zu Form, traditionsgeschichtlichem Hintergrund und Aussage von Kol 1,15–20* (WUNT 131; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 267, 270; Pollard, Thomas E. “Colossians 1.12–20: A Reconsideration,” *NTS* 27 (1981): 572–75, at 572f; Caird, George B. *Paul’s Letters from Prison: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon* (New Clarendon Bible; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), 174f; Aletti, Jean N. *Colossiens 1,15–20: Genre et exégèse du texte: fonction de la thématique sapientielle* (AnBib 91; Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1981), 107f; Wright, “Poetry,” esp. 444f, and passim; White, Joel. *Der Brief des Paulus an die Kolosser* (HTA; Holzgerlingen: SCM Brockhaus, 2018), 107f.

<sup>8</sup> Moo, Douglas J. *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon* (PNTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 136. Commentators who interpret peace in a similar way include Barth and Blanke, *Colossians*, 207; Dunn, James D. G. *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans/Paternoster, 1996), 103; and Pao, David W. *Colossians and Philemon: Zondervan Exegetical Commentary Series on the New Testament* (ZECNT 12; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 104. Barth and Blanke, *Colossians*, 217, interpret “‘creating peace’ as a characteristic of the universal power of God, and which expect peace as an eschatologically messianic gift.”

in our text.<sup>9</sup> He also argues that by adding διὰ τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ σταυροῦ αὐτοῦ the author of Colossians “joins with the common Christian parlance of the blood of Christ as a reference to the vicarious death of Christ, yet he gives it a Pauline interpretation by the addition of the phrase ‘of his cross.’”<sup>10</sup> Similarly, Jean Aletti points to cosmic peace as reflected in Jewish eschatology as the undergirding idea of peace, mentioning Philo’s *Specialibus Legibus* 2.190–92 in support.<sup>11</sup> Joachim Gnilka interprets the cosmic reconciliation in Colossians 1.20 in reference both to the Jewish eschatological promises of peace (such as Isaiah 9.5f, as well as Philo, *Spec. Leg.* 2.188–92) and the Hellenistic-Roman expectations of a Golden Age marked by universal peace (such as displayed in Virgil’s Fourth Eclogue).<sup>12</sup> He goes on to argue that the reference to “blood of his cross” is rooted in the idea of “covenant of blood” present in the Lord’s Supper tradition (Mark 14.24, and parallels).<sup>13</sup>

Unsurprisingly, the most cited background for the idea of “blood” (or “blood of the cross”) in Colossians 1.20 is the Old Testament sacrificial system with its emphasis on atonement. For G. K. Beale, “making peace” and “through the blood” in Colossians 1.20 should be interpreted in connection with the imagery of Christ as the new temple in verse 19, within which “peace” means “cosmic

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<sup>9</sup> Lohse, *Colossians*, 60, n. 204, see 59–61; cf. Bruce, F. F. *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 74–76; Idem. “Colossian Problems 2: The ‘Christ Hymn’ of Colossians 1.15–20,” *BibSac* 141 (1984): 99–111, at 109f; Pao, *Colossians*, 104, mentions Isaiah (LXX 52.6b–7; 54.13) in connection with “cosmic restoration;” also Pokorný, *Colossians*, 89, for whom “the hymn may be influenced by Pauline theology;” and “[w]hether or not they have been influenced by the Servant Songs of Second Isaiah (Is. 53.10–12; 2Macc. 7.30–38 [...] 7.33) can no longer be determined with certainty.” However, he does not present any arguments to support his claim. Pokorný goes on to say “[c]onspicuous is that, in the Servant Songs, we also read of the worldwide peace in the presence of God (Is. 52.6–10).” He also says that the insertion of “by the blood of his cross” might also be influenced by Pauline theology of the cross “tying into the tradition of the Lord’s Supper and baptism;” (cf. Schweizer, *Colossians*, 84, n. 81; Lincoln, Andrew. “The Letter to the Colossians,” in *The New Interpreter’s Bible* [ed. Leander E. Keck et al.; vol. 11; Nashville: Abingdon, 2000], 553–669, at 601, also suggests that the combined imagery of “blood” and “cross” is a Pauline influence).

<sup>10</sup> Lohse, *Colossians*, 60, n. 209. Cf. Arnold, Clinton E. *The Colossian Syncretism: The Interface Between Christianity and Folk Belief at Colossae* (WUNT 77; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1995), 269, who also mentions “pacification” in passing; Wolter, *Kolossier*, 86f.

<sup>11</sup> Aletti, Jean N. *Saint Paul, épître aux Colossiens: introduction, traduction et commentaire* (EBib 20; Paris: J. Gabalda, 1993), 112; see esp. Hartman, “Reconciliation,” for an appreciation of possible Philonic influence on Colossians 1.20; also Lyonnet, Stanislas. “L’hymne christologique de l’épître aux Colossiens et la fête juive de nouvel an,” *RSR* 48 (1960): 93–100; Pokorný, *Colossians*, 87f.

<sup>12</sup> Gnilka, *Kolossierbrief*, 74f.

<sup>13</sup> Gnilka, *Kolossierbrief*, 76.

restoration,”<sup>14</sup> and “blood” stands for the blood of sacrifice.<sup>15</sup> In this interpretation, Christ as the new temple is the place where reconciliation happens. Beale argues that the author views the concept of reconciliation as the beginning of the fulfilment of the Old Testament promises of Israel’s restoration.<sup>16</sup> Colossians 1.20 is then interpreted in a parallel relationship with verse 16 (which presents Christ’s co-creation role) meaning that “Christ’s reconciling work is part of the creating of a new creation in which ‘peace’ dwells, a connection found in the OT and elsewhere in Paul and in the NT.”<sup>17</sup>

Also stressing the Old Testament sacrificial system, Ernst Lohmeyer argues that Christ’s death in Colossians 1.20 represents the ultimate atonement and takes the place of Yom Kippur.<sup>18</sup> Similarly, Heinrich Meyer writes that “in Christ, by means of His ἰλαστήριον, through which God made peace (εἰρηνοποιήσας κτλ), the reconciliation of the whole has taken place...”<sup>19</sup> For Christian Stettler, the talk of reconciliation/peacemaking through blood in Colossians 1.20 evokes the ideas of the Jewish דָּוָשׁ and atonement through blood sacrifice by means of which the individuals who, on account of sin, are at enmity towards God find reconciliation.<sup>20</sup>

Among the commentators I have surveyed, James Dunn interprets the imagery of Colossians 1.20 in a colourful and unique way. Having observed that the blood of Christ in Pauline usage more naturally refers to Christ’s sacrificial death, he goes on to say that “here the imagery of warfare and triumph (2.15) suggests rather the blood of battle [...] it [Christ’s blood] is an instrument of warfare by which peace is achieved.”<sup>21</sup> It is not clear what Dunn means by that

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<sup>14</sup> Beale, G. K. *Colossians and Philemon* (BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2019), 112.

<sup>15</sup> Beale, G. K. *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 545.

<sup>16</sup> Beale, *Biblical Theology*, 543–46—this is from chapter 16 (527–55), which is entitled “Inaugurated Latter-Day Reconciliation as New Creation and Restoration from Exile.”

<sup>17</sup> Beale, *Colossians*, 110; cf. Idem. “The Old Testament Background of Reconciliation in 2 Corinthians 5–7 and Its Bearing on the Literary Problem of 2 Corinthians 6.14–7.1,” *NTS* 35 (1989): 550–81.

<sup>18</sup> Lohmeyer, Ernst. *Die Briefe an die Philipper, an die Kolosser und an Philemon* (KEK 12; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1961), 66–68.

<sup>19</sup> Meyer, Heinrich. A. W. *Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the Epistles to the Philippians and Colossians* (trans. John C. Moore; rev. William P. Dickson; Meyer’s Commentaries on the New Testament; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1875), 302, cf. 301–08. He does not, however, explore the possible backgrounds of εἰρηνοποιήσας. Cf. Stettler, *Kolosserhymnus*, 270–73.

<sup>20</sup> Stettler, *Kolosserhymnus*, 273–82. Similarly, White, *Kolosser*, 145–47; cf. Marshall, I. Howard. “The Meaning of “Reconciliation,” in *Unity and Diversity in New Testament Theology: Essays in Honour of George E. Ladd* (ed. by Robert A. Guelich; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 117–32, at 126.

<sup>21</sup> Dunn, *Colossians*, 103f.

– he does not elaborate on it – but he appears to be drawing on the imagery of *pax romana*.

Commentators have noticed that the well-known propaganda of *pax romana* is in fact another possible idea evoked by “making peace” in Colossians. Paul Foster, for instance, observes that “[t]he metaphor of ‘making peace’ may have had particular resonances in a Greco-Roman context given the imperial propaganda associated with the claims of *pax romana*, and claims by emperors such as Augustus to have been harbingers of divinely created peace.”<sup>22</sup> Foster, however, is more careful than most commentators and goes on to observe that the imagery also finds a place in the Jewish world, with the expression “the blood of his cross” evoking sacrificial ideas.<sup>23</sup> Similarly, David Pao suggests that “making peace” might have evoked different things for the Jewish and the Gentile hearers. Whereas the expression might have evoked the idea of cosmic eschatological restoration of Isaiah in the Jewish minds, on the other hand, for the Gentile audience, it might have evoked “the political propaganda of the early imperial period,” namely, *pax romana*.<sup>24</sup> Foster and Pao are right in perceiving multiple possible backgrounds operating simultaneously in Colossians 1.20.<sup>25</sup> In the present work, I aim to explore and develop further the insights offered by these scholars.

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<sup>22</sup> Foster, Paul. *Colossians* (BNTC; London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016), 198; cf. Bruce, *Colossians*, 76, who interprets reconciliation towards the *powers* in Colossians as meaning “pacification” (or “subjugation”) with reference to Col. 2.15. Although Bruce does not make it explicit, it is possible that he is referring to pacification as known in the *pax romana*; also Sumney, Jerry L. *Colossians: A Commentary* (Louisville: John Knox, 2008), 78; Wolter, *Kolossier*, 87f, who suggests that instead of the cosmic peace as in the Jewish New Year of Philo, *Spec. Leg.* 2.190–92, “[e]s ist aber wahrscheinlicher, daß in V 20 auf das Modell der Stiftung von Versöhnung und Frieden zurückgegriffen ist, wie es in hellenistisch-römischen Herrschaftstheorien begegnet.”

<sup>23</sup> Foster, *Colossians*, 198. This is the same approach of Sumney, *Colossians*, 77f; cf. Harris, *Colossians*, 51; Wright, N. T. *The Epistles of Paul to the Colossians and to Philemon: An Introduction and Commentary* (TNTC; Leicester: IVP, 1986), 76; Witherington, *Letters*, 136; Hay, David M. *Colossians* (ANTC; Nashville: Abingdon, 2000), 64; Moule, C. F. D. *The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Colossians and to Philemon: An Introduction and Commentary* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962), 71, writes that Christ’s death in this verse is viewed in terms of sacrifice “and possibly with associations recalling also the covenant of God with man.”

<sup>24</sup> Pao, *Colossians*, 104.

<sup>25</sup> Some commentators do not explore the background of “peacemaking through blood” in Colossians 1.20b mostly, though not always, because they take the expression in v. 20b to be synonymous with the reconciling act in 20a and place the focus of their interpretation in the former. These include Wilson, Robert McL. *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Colossians and Philemon* (ICC; London: T&T Clark, 2005), 154–59; McKnight, Scot. *The Letter to the Colossians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018), 162–67, who highlights the missiological aspect of “making peace” as the “conquering of warring parties [...] so that in the body of Christ one can discover unity among all [Col. 3.11].” (p. 165); Bird,

Outside the area of commentaries, a few other works bear on the study of “peacemaking through the blood of his cross” in Colossians 1.20, and deserve a mention here.

In his dissertation *Peace and Peacemaking in Paul and the Greco-Roman World*, published in 2014,<sup>26</sup> Edward Keazirian sets out to “examine peace and peacemaking in the ancient Greek and Roman literature from the age of Homer to the mid-1st CE, including especially the Pauline epistles.”<sup>27</sup> His goals were “(1) to identify the respective understandings of peace held by Paul and those within the Greco-Roman thought world; (2) to determine how Paul’s understanding of peace may have differed from theirs, and (3) to discover what strategies and methods Paul used in resolving conflict among believers in his churches.”<sup>28</sup> The latter reveals the somewhat more pastoral-ecclesiological aspect of his research which comes to the fore in the third part of his thesis, “Paul’s approach to peacemaking and conflict resolution.” His main contribution to the studies of peace in Paul is arguably his conclusion that “the Greco-Roman thought-world considered conflict the norm and viewed peace as a welcome, though temporary, respite from conflict, while Paul considered peace to be the norm and saw conflict as an intrusive and unacceptable aberration.”<sup>29</sup> However, despite the title, as Michael Gorman observes in his review of Keazirian, he dedicates only four pages to the specific Roman context and restricts his analysis to the undisputed Pauline letters thus leaving room for expansion on his research.<sup>30</sup> Additionally, Gorman goes on, a second way in which the study of peace in Paul needs expanding is by giving more attention to the Old Testament עֲלִיּוֹת. Whereas I will deal with the Old Testament in the

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Michael F. *Colossians and Philemon: A New Covenant Commentary* (NCCS 12; Eugene: Cascade Books, 2009), 57; MacDonald, *Colossians*, 64; Martin, Ralph P. *Colossians and Philemon* (NCBC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973), 60f, who argues that the phrase was added by Paul to an original hymn mainly to counter gnostic ideas of redemption and reconciliation (cf. Martin, “Reconciliation and Forgiveness,” 113–15), but he does interpret “the blood of his cross” as anchoring “Christ’s work in his sacrificial death for sinners” (Martin, *Reconciliation*, 121); Lincoln, *Colossians*, 600f; Lightfoot, J. B. *Saint’s Paul’s Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon* (London: Macmillan, 1897), 158; Abbott, Thomas K. *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary to the Epistles to the Ephesians and to the Colossians* (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1897), 220–24; Hübner, *Kolosser*, 62f; Lindemann, *Kolossenerbrief*, 30f. Also, Arnold, *Colossian Syncretism*, 267–69.

<sup>26</sup> Keazirian, Edward M. *Peace and Peacemaking in Paul and the Greco-Roman World* (SBL 145; Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2014).

<sup>27</sup> Keazirian, *Peace and Peacemaking*, 3.

<sup>28</sup> Idem.

<sup>29</sup> Keazirian, *Peace and Peacemaking*, 183.

<sup>30</sup> Gorman, Michael J. “Paul the Peacemaker?” review of *Peace and Peacemaking in Paul and the Greco-Roman World*, by Edward M. Keazirian. *The Expository Times* 126.9 (2015): 457–58, at 458.

second part of this thesis, it is my hope that our analysis of the Graeco-Roman frame of *pax romana* in the first part will begin to address the Roman context.

Another potentially relevant work is Willard M. Swartley's *Covenant of Peace: The Missing Peace in the New Testament Theology and Ethics*.<sup>31</sup> Swartley's book epitomises typical Mennonite teaching on peace, with its characteristic strong emphasis on the ethical aspect of it. *Covenant of Peace* aims at placing the theme of peace/peacemaking at the centre of the New Testament theology and ethics thus providing a corrective to what he refers as marginalization of peace in New Testament theologies and ethics.<sup>32</sup> Although he sets out to provide a canonical evaluation of peace in the New Testament, and even dedicates two chapters to Paul (he treats both Colossians and Ephesians as Pauline letters), he only mentions Colossians in passing – as an illustration or supporting argument – when it parallels, and occasionally advances, some argument built on other Pauline letters (mainly Romans and Ephesians). I find this “marginalization” of Colossians disconcerting for at least one principal reason: reconciliation/peace in Colossians 1.20 plays a key role in “peace-building” – one of Swartley's main emphases<sup>33</sup> – in the parenetic section of the letter (Col. 3.5–4.6). It seems to me that any study on the ethical/moral aspects of peace in the New Testament must reckon with the paraenesis of Colossians.<sup>34</sup>

In a “background study” such as ours, it seems worth taking note of Paul Foster's important warning against the pitfall of limiting Paul's cultural influence to the Jewish background, thus failing to recognise Paul's multicultural world.<sup>35</sup> In his words, a “prior decision to limit Paul's cultural sphere solely to the Jewish scriptures fails to take account of the multicultural world that Paul inhabited, and it ignores the variegated textual influences that may have shaped Paul's thought.”<sup>36</sup> He goes on to say, and rightly so, that “[t]here is a tendency to dichotomize ‘Jewish background’ and ‘Hellenistic background,’ as though

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<sup>31</sup> Swartley, Willard M. *Covenant of Peace: The Missing Peace in the New Testament Theology and Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006).

<sup>32</sup> Swartley, *Covenant of Peace*, 4; cf. Appendix 1 (431–71).

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Swartley, *Covenant of Peace*, 191, 216–19.

<sup>34</sup> Not to mention Eph. 3–6 and Philemon.

<sup>35</sup> What he says about Paul is also true of other NT writers such as the author of Colossians.

<sup>36</sup> Foster, Paul. “Echoes Without Resonance: Critiquing Certain Aspects of Recent Scholarly Trends in the Study of the Jewish Scriptures in the New Testament,” *JSNT* 38.1 (2015): 96–111, at 98. Foster credits such tendency to Hays' overall approach that “Paul repeatedly situates his discourse within the symbolic field created by a single textual precursor: Israel's Scripture.” (Hays, Richard. *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* [Yale: Yale University Press: 1989], 15). For a response to Foster's article, particularly his critique of the search for OT allusions in Colossians, see Beale, G. K. “The Old Testament in Colossians,” *JSNT* 41.2 (2018): 261–74.

these were entirely discrete entities with no overlap whatsoever.”<sup>37</sup> Foster’s criticism of such a monolithic approach to Paul’s cultural background is relevant and perhaps even overdue. However, Foster’s denunciation should be extended to both extremes for, on the other side of the spectrum, one finds those who treat Paul as some sort of Greek philosopher/writer, seemingly relegating any influence from his Jewishness to a bare minimum. For instance, Cilliers Breytenbach argues that the theological use of the καταλλαγσ- word group to refer to the reconciliation between God and human beings “is so rare that it can safely be regarded as a metaphorical mapping of non-religious terminology unto a religious domain.”<sup>38</sup> He identifies the source domain of Paul’s language (especially in reference to 2Cor. 5.18–20) in the Hellenistic and Roman polis-diplomacy,<sup>39</sup> with no cultic background.<sup>40</sup> In fact, he says, there is no need to speak of “reconciliation” as a Jewish idea, and “it is just as impossible to derive the concept from Deutero-Isaiah or Jesus’s ministry.”<sup>41</sup> Reflecting similar exegetical inclination towards the origin of the “reconciliation” talk in the Pauline corpus, Ralph Martin has argued that “*‘Reconciliation’ is the way Paul formulated his gospel in communicating it to the Gentiles.* The terminology is not restricted to the Old Testament-Judaic tradition; it has little if any cultic-forensic association.”<sup>42</sup> Therefore, it is possible to argue that any limitations regarding the social-cultural influences in a letter such as Colossians, whether on the writer or on the readers, lead to reductionism and potentially curtail the interpreter’s ability to consider the full impact of a given passage.

After a careful analysis of the material on Colossians 1.20, we may list the following conclusions: (1) there is no consensus on what imagery the metaphorical expressions εἰρηνοποιήσας διὰ τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ σταυροῦ αὐτοῦ might have evoked; (2) no major dissertation has explored at length either the Graeco-Roman or the Jewish conceptual systems behind the idea of *peacemaking through blood* in Colossians 1.20b; (3) the richness of the imagery evoked by the participial phrase εἰρηνοποιήσας διὰ τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ σταυροῦ αὐτοῦ does

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<sup>37</sup> Foster, “Echoes,” 99.

<sup>38</sup> Breytenbach, C. “Salvation of the Reconciled (with a Note on the Background of Paul’s Metaphor of Reconciliation),” in *Grace, Reconciliation, Concord: The Death of Christ in Graeco-Roman Metaphors* (NovTSup; Leiden: Brill, 2010), 171–86, at 172. Breytenbach does use language from Cognitive Semantics for his analysis of metaphors.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Breytenbach, “Salvation,” 177f; cf. his fuller treatment of the semantic range of the καταλλαγσ- word group in Breytenbach, Cilliers. *Versöhnung: Eine Studie zur paulinischen Soteriologie* (WMANT 60; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1989).

<sup>40</sup> Breytenbach, “Salvation,” 177f; *Versöhnung*, 159–70, 193–215.

<sup>41</sup> Breytenbach, *Versöhnung*, 187; cf. 45–83. Breytenbach, *Versöhnung*, 191, briefly notices that “Die Versöhnungsvorstellung des Kolosserhymnus hat jedoch andere traditionsgeschichtliche Wurzeln.” But he does not elaborate on the reconciliation in Colossians as his study focuses on the undisputed letters, i.e., Romans and 2 Corinthians.

<sup>42</sup> Martin, *Reconciliation*, 153 (italics original).



not seem to be fully grasped solely by reading it against one possible background, but by assessing the variety of possible frames activated by the metaphorical expressions; (4) closely connected with the previous point, it seems clear that background studies of the biblical text are still dominated by an either/or approach aimed at determining *the* definitive background; and (5) no one has applied insights from Conceptual Metaphor Theory and Frame Semantics as a means to assess the possibility of multiple backgrounds (frames) activated by the metaphorical expressions *ειρηνοποιήσας διὰ τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ σταυροῦ αὐτοῦ* in Colossians 1.20b.<sup>43</sup>

My thesis aims at providing a small corrective to such common “either/or” approaches to the text by assessing both the Graeco-Roman and Jewish frames potentially evoked by the Colossians conceptualisation of *peacemaking through blood* (Col. 1.20b). CL insights on conceptual metaphor and frame semantics help the interpreter to do justice to the “wider” world of the first century New Testament writer, an amalgamation of both Jewish and Graeco-Roman socio-cultural influences. Therefore, in what follows, I outline the relevant insights from CL that bear on the interpretation of our text.

## B. Method: The Conceptualisation of Metaphor and Frame Semantics

A dramatic shift in the way we understand the process of meaning in communication has taken place with the rise of CL studies in the 1970s.<sup>44</sup> Some insights from this already well-established field can provide us with a way into

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<sup>43</sup> Although Breytenbach applies such insights in his analysis of the metaphor of reconciliation in 2Cor. 5.18–20 (Breytenbach, “Salvation.”).

<sup>44</sup> Some of the main works include Lakoff, George, and Mark Johnson. *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980); Lakoff, George. *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and Its Challenge to Western Thought* (New York: Basic Books, 1999); Fillmore, Charles. “Frame Semantics and the Nature of Language,” in *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences: Conference on the Origin of Language and Speech* 280 (1976), 20–32; Idem. “Frame Semantics,” in *The Cognitive Linguistic Reader* (eds. Vyvyan Evans, Benjamin K. Bergen, and Jörg Zinken; London: Equinox, 2007), 238–62; Langacker, Ronald. *Foundations of Cognitive Grammar* (2 vols.; Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987); cf. Fauconnier, Gilles, and Mark Turner. *The Way We Think: Conceptual Blending and the Mind’s Hidden Complexities* (New York: Basic Books, 2002). For a useful summary of the interdisciplinary field of CL, see Johnson, Mark. *Embodied Mind, Meaning, and Reason: How Our Bodies Give Rise to Understanding* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017), 1–34.

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