PAX, PEACE AND THE NEW TESTAMENT

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Introduction

Peace was a significant concept for the early Christians. The fact that ειρηνη, or its cognates, appears in the New Testament exactly 100 times clearly indicates the significance of "peace" for the early Christian communities. It is the purpose of this paper to present the concept of peace in the New Testament within the cultural context of the Roman *pax*.

This paper will begin with a brief methodological discussion. There have been several methodical difficulties in previous studies of the early Christian concept of peace. After addressing these questions in method, this study will present six basic elements that constituted the *Pax Romana*. Stefen Weinstock's discussion of the *Pax Cult* and the "Ara Pacis" will serve as a definitional basis for establishing these elements. Each of these elements will then be compared with the New Testament documents. These are to serve as illustrative examples of the New Testament concept of peace, as it correlates with the concept of *pax*.

Obviously the selection of the New Testament texts as a collection for this study is historically artificial. Ideally an historical study such as this would incorporate all early Christian sources regardless of their latter canonical status. As will be shown in the method section, the study of peace has been focused

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on the concerns of present day Christians and Jews. Thus, the New Testament as a collection must be addressed.

After the focal point of this study is complete, a brief discussion of the Greek and Jewish concepts of peace will be studied. This will then be followed by outlining the Pan-Mediterranean sociocultural matrix within which the notion of peace functioned as a transcultural concept.

Methodological considerations

Several major works have been produced in the study of the New Testament concept of peace. Klaus Wengst, for example, has produced the main text on the *Pax Romana* and the New Testament.[2] His study, like most such works, are methodologically flawed. Wengst's otherwise excellent study is biased and evaluative. He sees the *Pax Romana* merely as a Roman justificaiton for a politically oppressive regime[3]:

> Just as the freedom granted from above is ony the cloak under which slavery and exploitation are concealed, so the law granted from above proves to be not only patchy but also class justice.

In contrast, the New Testament promotion of peace takes into consideration the needs of the oppressed, and thus stands in opposition to *pax*. For Wengst, there are two basic responses that early Christians had in regard to the *Pax Romana*[4]:

> The two most widely divergent positions, those of the Revelation of John and 1 Clement, are hardly separated in time and are connected with similar events, with persecutions under the emperor Domitian. But whereas the seer John sees the actions of Rome as expressing such a murderous rage that he can understand Rome only as the

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2   Klaus Wengst, *Pax Romana and the Peace of Jesus Christ*. Tr. John Bowden. Phil.: Fortress, 1987.

3   K. Wengst, *Pax Romana*, p. 39.

4   K. Wengst, *Pax Romana*, p. 137.

incarnation of Satan and cries out for this history of violence to be broken off, Clement the Roman only looks back in passing at the time of persecution which has just been withstood as at a storm that has passed over. For him this was a "state of emergency" which has nothing to do with normal conditions.

The value judgements made throughout *Pax Romana* detract from the value of the book. These same judgements, furthermore, cause Wengst to misinterpret historical events as oppressive/corrupt. For example, his reference to Herod the Great gaining the friendship of Octavian, as well as between Vespasian and Agrippa II, as "political calculation" of Rome to employ "kings among the instruments of servitude"[5] does not take into consideration the patron-client social system. Similar problems arise when Wengst refers to the Roman distribution of gifts and organization of games. He does not recognize the role of $\delta o \xi \alpha$ in the hierarchical structure of Greco-Roman society.[6] Thus, Wengst's biased premise causes him to miss the cultural setting of early Christianity and the Roman Empire.

The modern desire to promote peace is a significant hinderance in the academic study of peace in early Christianity. Most of the writers on this subject emerge out of peace promoting groups, such as the Mennonites. Thus, a theological and social agenda dominates the field in relation to peace studies. For example, Perry Yoder studies the concept of shalom ("peace") within the Hebrew Bible, yet with a present-day concern[7]:

> This discussion is offered finally in the hope that it might lead to greater clarity and understanding among people who are working for peace, both in the first world and the third world.

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[5]   K. Wengst, *Pax Romana*, p. 25.

[6]   See Cicero, *De Officiis* 2.9-11 for a useful description of the social function of "glory" in Greco-Roman society.

[7]   Perry B. Yoder, *Shalom: The Bible's Word of Salvation, Justice, and Peace*. Institute of Mennonite Studies Series Number 7. Newton, KS: Faith and Life Press, 1987, p. 9.

Michel Desjardins has recognized that the promotion of peace in New Testament studies has resulted in an overlooking of the violence-promoting elements in the New Testament. He has outlined four basic reasons for this tendency. First of all, those who study New Testament peace are by-and-large Christians with a pacifist orientation. Secondly, there is "a traditional grouping of 'NT' and 'OT' studies into 'biblical studies'". Thus, the shift from what seems a more violent collection (the Hebrew Bible) to a seemingly less violent collection (the New Testament) results in a peace emphasis in perceiving the New Testament texts. The third possible reason given by Desjardins is the "life-affirming" nature of religious studies — i.e., there is a desire to encourage diversity and mutual respect for others. The final reason for the peace emphasis in scholarship is the traditional definition of peace and violence in physical, rather than social, terms. Thus, the violence in the New Testament, that is a form of dehumanization rather than overt physical violence, is generally overlooked.[8]

Given the methodological difficulties present in much of the current literature on the issue of peace, this study emphasizes the cultural context of the New Testament writings. This is an essential element in any historical method. Modern concerns, values, definitions, and trends must not be determinative in the study of another period in history. Objectivity, of course, is merely an unattainable ideal — yet, it is a goal that must be striven after. Thus, this study studies the New Testament concept of peace in the cultural context of the first century C.E. The antithetical relationship between the Roman *pax* and the early Christian communities, which modern scholarship has advocated, must be evaluated within a culturally comparative analysis.

Concept of *Pax* and NT *Peace*

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[8] Michel Desjardins, "The Promotion of Peace and Violence in the NT", presented at the AAR/SBL Annual meeting in San Francisco, 1992.

The definition of peace for this study is primarily based on Stefen Weinstock's discussion of the development of the Pax Cult and the "Ara Pacis".[9]   Weinstock began his study with the evolving definition of *pax* as it became personified and eventually the heart of imperial (Roman) policy. Four specific statements on pax should be pu forth at the outset[10]:

> *Pax*, the root — noun — of the verb *pacisci*, did not originally mean "peace" but a "pact" which ended war and led to submission, friendship, or alliances.

> Pax as a political slogan had two different aspects. One concerned the citizens of Rome, the other the rest of the world. For the citizens *pax* depended on *Condordia*... from 49 onwards the winged caduceus appears on coins, often held by clasped hands, the symbol of concord.

> Foreign countries had long since ceased to be the equals of Rome; *pax* was no longer a pact among equals or peace but submission to Rome, just as *pacare* began to refer to conquest.

> The *imperium* of Rome provides its subjects with protection against external and civil war; if they pay taxes, they pay for this *pax sempiterna* and *otium*.

There are six elements of "peace" that can be drawn from Weinstock, which are very clearly present within the New Testament corpus.[11]

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[9]   Stefen Weinstock, "Pax and the 'Ara Pacis'", *JRomS* 50 (1960): 44-58.

[10]   S. Weinstock, "Pax and the 'Ara Pacis'", 45.

[11]   It should be kept clearly in mind that Weinstock does not deal with Christianity or the New Testament in his article. His interest is in the Ara Pacis and the Pax Cult overral within the imperial dynamics of the Roman Empire.   His concepts, as well as the classical literature he draws on in his analysis, are however very relevant in our study on the New Testament concept of peace.

The basic root meaning of *pax*, within a lexical discussion with *pacisci*, is evidently the concept of ending, or the state of a lack of, conflict. For the Romans this element of *pax* emerged out of the civil wars that tore at the very social fabric of the Republic. There was a strong desire within Roman society to avoid any such repeat — whether that be from an internal threat (such as the civil wars) or an external threat.

This same principle is found in such passages as Heb. 12.14: "Pursue peace with everyone, and the holiness without which no one will see the Lord."[12] The designation παντων — especially when grammatically balanced in this opening clause with ειρηνην — would clearly imply a peaceful, non-confrontational co-existence with both insiders and outsiders.

Similarily, Paul's own dealings with the Jews — eschatologically as well as soteriologically — in Romans 9-11 is clearly an attempt to include the Jews in the coming Kingdom. When compared with other Pauline passages, such as 1 Cor. 10.1-12 and Phil. 3.2-4 where more heightened anti-Judaic statements are made, Rom. 11.1-12 would appear to be an attempt to pacify a growing conflict between Judaism and Christianity. It is significant to note that Romans, and indeed much of the undisputed Pauline letters, were written at a time when Christians viewed themselves as a part of Judaism — indeed, as the first segment of Christ's followers to lead the rest in Judaism to the Messianic climax of the ages. Peter Richardson has convincingly pointed out that it is not until the mid-second century (Justin's *Dialogue*) when we find the designation "Israel" being used exclusively by Christians.[13] Thus, it is only after the Bar Kochba Revolt of 132-35 when the final break between Christianity and Judaism occurs, and Christians begin to define themselves as replacing Judaism as the new Israel. This was developmentally

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[12] All quotations from the Bible are taken from the New Revised Standard Version.

[13] Peter Richardson, *Israel in the Apostolic Church*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969.

preceeded by the Revolt of 66-74 and the Diaspora Revolts of 115-17. Furthermore, the conflict resolution of Romans 11.1-12 should be seen as being produced on the eve of both the State persecution of the Christian churches, where tradition indicates Paul lost his own life under Nero, as well as the growing tension between Palestinian Judaism and the Roman government. Thus, seeing Romans emerging out of this larger historical context sheds light on Paul's emphasis on harmonious relations with other Jews (Christian or other), as well as the inclusive nature of Pauline eschatology. Paul is a Jew attempting to place Christianity peacefully within the larger framework of Judaism, and Judaism within the theological framework of Christianity.[14]

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[14] Alan Segal, "Universalism in Judaism and Christianity", *CSBS Bulletin* 51 (1991/92): 20-35; "In order to see the tradition fully, we must look both in the Christian community and the Jewish community. Neither one gives us the whole picture. Nor is it clear that in all cases that both Judaism and Christianity will always develop the same theological doctrines to face parallel problems. But in this case they did. Futhermore, neither community gives us enough information to discover the history by itself. We need the witness of both to understand either" (35).

The writer of Acts has the same goal in mind, when he attempts to present a unified Gentile-Jewish Christianity — that is, to end an internal conflict within Christianity. Significantly, Luke-Acts goes beyond internal (Christian) harmony, and also sees Christianity within the larger Jewish framework.[15] Later Christians, such as Justin (*Second Apology*) and the pseudo-Pauline author of Ephesians (Eph. 2), attempted a similar peace mission in regard to Christian-Roman conflicts. In relation to ideological conflicts, Valentinus could be seen as another proponent for a peaceful co-existence of Christianity and Greco-Roman concepts. Valentinus wished to find a harmony between the philosophical trends of his day (mid-second century) and his Christian beliefs. Unlike Justin, Valentinus was not hailed as a hero of the faith due to such intellectual attempts.

The second principle that emerges from Weinstock is the insider-outsider concept. Peace applied differently to Romans and non-Romans. Similarly, an insider-outsider element is present throughout the New Testament. The concept of *concordia* connected to *pax*, being a development of the first principle, indicates a need for a unity within the insiders group, as well as a need for harmonious co-existence with the outsider group.

Although several New Testament examples could be cited as parallels to this second principle, 1 Peter will serve as an excellent representative. First Peter 1.6-8, contrasted with 2.9-10, clearly presents the outsider and the insider concept. First Peter 1.22-23 plainly reveals the unity that is to be found within the insiders' community. The emphasis is clearly on a "genuine mutual love". Paul, with similar usage of αγαπη in 1 Cor. 13, also stresses unity through love within the community. First Peter 2.12-17 clearly reveals the need for a peaceful — non-conflicting — co-existence

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[15] Larry Murphy indirectly implies this in his dissertation on Israel's restoration eschatology in relation to the concept of the Twelve. Larry Edwin Murphy, "The Concept of the Twelve in Luke-Acts as a Key to the Lukan perspective on the restoration of Israel", Ph.D. diss., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1988.

with the "Gentiles" (v. 12), "the human institution... governors" (v. 13) and the "emperor" (v. 17). Peter writes to his community in an attempt to encourage them to stay within the Christian faith despite the persecutions facing them. An ontological "insider-outsider" technique is utilized to accomplish this goal. As Troy Martin indicates, the author is responding to defection (or potential defection) away from Christianity "by the rhetorical strategy of suppression".[16]

Typically, Peter does not intend to dehumanize his opponents or his recipients. The insider-outsider element in 1 Peter is closely connected to the first principle of *pax*: First Peter 2.11-3.12 ("Aliens in this World") promotes a non-conflicting relationship between Christianity and the "outsiders". Peter exhorts his readers to render their social obligations to the outsiders; i.e., to "honor... to recognize the position and rights of others".[17] This is a non-subversive promotion of *concordia* along the Petrine eschatological journey, yet within an insider-outsider frame of reference.

First Peter 2.10, which functions as the transitional verse into the "exiles" and "aliens" section of the letter, indicates that the author is in line with Roman insider exclusivity. *Pax Romana* entailed a high level of egocentric nationalism. As noted above, this world-view of being a *special* and *exclusive* group increased over time. In 2.10, the antithetical "once you were not a people, but now are God's people" presents in rhetorical fashion a contrast between the Petrine community and the world within which they exist as "aliens". In order to encourage the community the author raises the insiders to a special status over against their former non-Christian (outsider) condition. The parallel with v. 10b isolates the outsiders as those without mercy. The primary clause in 10a and 10b (οι ποτε ου λαοζ / οι ουκ ηλεημευοι) presents the former condition of the believers, and by implication the current

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[16] Troy Martin, *Metaphor and Composition in First Peter*. SBL-DS 131. Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1992, 157.

[17] T. Martin, *Metaphor and Composition*, p. 204.

condition of the outsiders. The close correlation between "people" and God's "mercy" is present here, and in the two subordinant clauses: To recieve God's mercy is dependent on being God's people. The two subordinant clauses (νυν δε λαοζ / νυν δε ελεηθεντεζ) shift the focus, antithetically, to the special status of the believers.

As 1 Pet. 2.10 ends the "new birth" section and sets the stage for the "exiles" section of the letter, it is significant to note that the believers are presented as "outsiders" in v. 11. This reflects the believers' self-definition. The author agrees in v. 11 that they are outsiders in *this* world, yet this is only to be expected; they are "insiders" in *God's* world (v. 10) and thus should only perceive their presence in this world as a temporary visit. Martin's presentation of the Diaspora metaphor aptly fits this verse.[18] Peter's insider-outsider presentation fits the Roman concept of *pax*, and emerges out of his consolatory concern for the well being of his audience. This example clearly illustrates the *concordia* and insider-outsider presence in early Christian thought.[19]

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[18] The Diaspora as overarching metaphor, as well as the three-fold breakdown of 1 Peter's letter body, is presented and discussed in T. Martin's *Metaphor and Composition*.

[19] One of the most recent, and best, studies of the Petrine community is T. Martin's *Metaphor and Composition in First Peter*, where he explores the metaphor of a spiritual/eschatological journey on the part of the community (this is seen within a compositional analysis of 1 Peter — Martin's focus is upon this literary question). In a private telephone conversation, Martin and I explored the eschatological emphasis on the enlightenment of the community's oppressors, rather than the apocalyptic judgement motif, which is more prominent in the Pauline writings and Revelation. Consequently, the Petrine community is to live in a harmonious concordia with its society (through good works, as defined along Christian, rather than Greco-Roman, practices), as the End Times are present (and subsequently the imminent parusia of Jesus) and the persecution will soon end. As to whether an inclusive finale (bringing the oppressors into the insiders group once enlightened) will occur or not is questionable.

The third element present in the definition of the Roman peace is the submissive element. For Weinstock *pax* deals primarily with the submission of Rome's enemies. Although this concept of submission is present in early Christian thought, it is also expanded in the New Testament to demand the submission of those within the insiders group to the leader/leaders of the power structure. This inner submissive emphasis is presented on the basis of preserving and promoting the good of the community as a whole (i.e., to promote the group peace over against the individual's peace). This is well illustrated by Acts 5.1-11. The death of Ananias and Sapphira — especially when compared with Barnabas' submission in 4.36-37 (which the author surely intended to convey) — clearly illustrates that lack of total commitment (submission) to the Church will result in judgement. The statement in 5.11, "And great fear came upon the whole church, and upon all who heard of these things", further indicates that this pericope is meant to instill a submissive fear within the Church. This is evident on the literary level, as 4.36-37 and 5.11 act as an interpretative inclusion for 5.1-10.

The submissive element in the New Testament not only applies to insiders, but also to outsiders. Revelation is the best example of this element. The submissive aspect is seen in the apocalyptic judgement of God/Christ. Revelation 21.5-8 is an excellent example of the insider-outsider judgement found in this document. The conquering and reigning image of "the Lamb" (Jesus) in 22.3-5 further parallels the Roman conquest of enemies. It is possible that the conflict within Revelation does not indicate an external confict, but rather an intra-community conflict. This position has been argued by Alan Le Grys. He states that the Nicolaitans (due to the comparision drawn with "Balaam") could refer to conflict within the church over idolatry (cf. Hosea 2). Furthermore, "it is possible... that "Jezebel" represents a brand of Pauline Christianity, in favour of social contact and compromise

The Petrine author does, however, downplay the extent of violence in his End Time conceptualization than other New Testament authors (such as the anonomyous author of 2 Peter, Jude and Revelation).

— perhaps even for good evangelistic reasons".[20] This conflict emerges as sectarian behaviour. Although this is an acceptable interpretation, it is only partly correct. The strong anti-Jewish and anti-Roman language in Revelation is best seen as indicating conflict between Christianity and others (outsiders). Thus, Revelation combats on three fronts: insider-insider conflict (Christians), insider-outsider conflict (Rome), and insider-related confict (Jews). The conquering motif, however, is present in all three instances.[21]

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[20] Alan Le Grys, "Conflict and Vengeance", p. 77.

[21] Another presentation of this submissive element can be found in the Pauline writings. Philippians 2.10 further promotes this submissive concept of all people toward Jesus (see also Romans 14.11).

The fourth concept of *pax* to emerge is the idea of *imperium*. Klassen presents this concept in his *Love of Enemies*. Although Klassen overemphasized this concept in his attempt to pacify the God of the Tanakh[22], he is correct in applying this to a peace motif in the Biblical tradition. Weinstock's brief usage of this term is far more constructive and objective. The connotation of judgement and protection suit the New Testament writings well. Once again, as in the Roman usage, *imperium* is directed toward both internal and external threats. Paul (or pseudo-Paul) clearly presents this in his Christological-Eschatological statement in 2 Thess. 1.7-8. Second Peter 2.1, in light of the whole of chapter 2 and Jude, also presents this aspect, but in regard to members of the community. The development of heresiology is clearly present in this verse, and indicates the beginnings of this practice of "inner" *imperium*.[23] The opponents of Revelation are vividly presented in this fashion — both those of an internal and external threat: The Romans (outsiders), the Nicolatian gnostics (internal threat), and the Jews (related threat between the interior-exterior categories). These are not isolated selections, as the careful reader will see when reading any of the New Testament documents in context. The concept of *imperium* within the New Testament texts clearly emerges out of the Hebrew concept of Yahweh as a "man of war" or warrior God (Ex. 15.3-4).[24] The only true exception within the canon is Philemon, which the size and nature of clearly explains the absence of this principle.

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[22] William Klassen, *Love of Enemies: The Way to Peace*. Overtures to Biblical Theology 15. Phil.: Fortress, 1984, pp. 31-2.

[23] The usage of the qualitative genitive απωλειας to define αιρεσειζ as "destructive" opinions, indicates that αιρεσειζ (as "heresy") was developing, and subsequently heresiology developed in the second century.

[24] See Willard M. Swartley's discussion on this issue (*Slavery, Sabbath, War, and Women*, 103-12). Cf. Patrick Miller, *The Divine Warrior in Early Israel* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1972); idem, "God the Warrior", *Inter* 19 (1965): 35-46. Of special importance is Gerhard von Rad's *Der heilige Drieg im Alten Israel* (Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1951).

The fifth principle of *pax* is found in Weinstock's statement "if they pay taxes, they pay for this *pax sempiterna* and *otium*" (p. 45). The basic underlining principle? In order to have *pax*, with special reference to the fourth principle of protection, those under the Roman structure must offer support for the establishment — primarily financial. Although pericopes such as Mk. 12.13-17 (parr. with Matt. 22.15-22, Lk. 20.20-26, *Gos.Thom.* 100) could be used to illustrate the presence of this fifth principle in the New Testament, the Pauline "collection" is the best example. In order to build harmonious relations with the Jerusalem Church, Paul embarks upon a special offering to assist the needy in that Church. First Corinthians 16.1-4 best illustrates this collection in connection to *pax*, especially in light of 15.58: Paul has a local church that is in disunity, as well as in rebellion against his own apostolic authority (2 Cor. 11.16 - 12.14). He promotes unity in 1 Cor. 12, with αγαπη as the heart of that unity (1 Cor. 13). In chapter 16, Paul places the Corinthians' responsibility to the universal Church in the fore. This is both a personal goal on Paul's part as well as a continuation of his emphasis for peace within the Church, both local and global.[25] He hopes to attain these goals through presenting the collection issue. It is no mere coincidence that this statement follows an exhortation to be "always excelling in the work of the Lord... your labor is not in vain" (15.58). The idea of supporting the establishment financially as an attempt to establish a unifying peace — in this case in a dual sense: Paul with the Jerusalem Church and the more specific crisis of division in Corinth — is clearly present in the Corinthian correspondence.

The final principle of peace (*pax*) that Weinstock presents is the focal point of his whole paper: the personification and eventual

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[25] See Daniel C. Arichea's ("Peace in the New Testament", p. 203) statement in regard to 1 Cor. 13.11: "This was a message needed by the Corinthian Church because of the presence of divisions and schisms within the fellowship. The 'God of love and peace' would be the God who makes it possible for people to love one another and to live in harmony with one another".

worship of "*Pax*" (as well as *Concordia*). To bluntly state that the early Christians, at least as presented in the New Testament[26], personified and worshiped *Pax* (Peace), would be an overstatement to put it lightly. The Christians did, however, connect peace to a deified figure. This figure varies from God to Jesus interchangeably. Klassen is theologically correct when he refers to the Pauline Jesus as the "Prince of Peace".

The very salutation section of the Pauline letters indicates the correlation of peace and Jesus/God. Romans 1.7b serves as an excellent example of this: ειρηνη απο θεου πατροζ ημυν και κυριου Ιησου Χριστου. The usage of απο (from) along with the genitive case for θεου and κυριου Ιησου Χριστου, clearly indicates that the source of peace is found in God/Jesus — the και, at one and the same time, separates and connects God and Jesus. Although απο certainly supports a "source" interpretation of the genitive, it is also possible that Paul is also — though as a secondary meaning if a double meaning is intended — using the genitive as a characteristic connector between ειρηνη and θεου/Ιησου Χριστου.

This form of salutation, connecting χαριζ and ειρηνη to God and Jesus Christ, is standard throughout the Pauline writings. Of the seven undisputed letters, only Galatians has a variant reading

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[26] The various references to believers turning back to "idols" in the New Testament may imply that the Christians, or at least a substantial number within the communities, were in fact involved in the worshipings of the Roman state or culture. To narrow this down to the worship of the Pax Cult would certainly be stretching the evidence. Some references include: 1 Cor. 5.10, 11; 6.9; 10.7, 14; 8.1, 4, 10; 10.19, 28; 2 Cor. 6.16; Eph. 5.5; Rev. 21.8; 22.15; 2.14, 20; 9. 20; 1 Pet. 4.3; Acts 17.16; 15.20, 29; 21.25; Gal. 5.20; Col. 3.5; Rom. 2.22; 1 Thess. 1.9; 1 Jn. 5.21. See also R. P. C. Hanson, "The Christian Attitude to Pagan Religions up to the Time of Constantine the Great", *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Romischen Welt* 23/2 (1980): 910-1021, and Donald L. Jones, "Christianity and the Roman Imperial Cult", *ibid.*, 1023-1054.

where some mss. drop Ιησου Χριστου and merely leave κυριου. The best mss., however, have Ιησου Χριστου.[27] Thus, the definite Pauline texts present this formula. Of the disputed letters only Colossians lacks any reference to κυριου Ιησου Χριστου in conjunction with "grace" and "peace"; yet even with Colossians, other good mss. have Jesus Christ mentioned. First and Second Timothy add ελεοζ ("mercy") to the salutation. Thus, the Pauline tradition clearly connected the concept of "peace" with the divine figure within the salutation section of the letters.

Whether or not peace is part of the divine makeup, the connection of peace with the divine, which is present throughout the Pauline corpus, is clearly present, and subsequently parallels the Roman deification — at least in the sense of a religious concept. This "almost" deification will emerge throughout Christian history. Perhaps the most vivid example of this is the mosaic of Justinian (as binder of Church and State) in the S. Vitale (*ca*. 547 CE).

Jewish and Greek concepts

Having outlined the New Testament concept of peace in connection with the *Pax Romana*, it is now necessary to briefly look at the other two major influences upon formative Christianity. This study will survey the Jewish concept of shalom, and then the Greek concept of ειρηνη. Each of these cultural milieus were intearctive with Roman culture. Consequently, a global concept of peace will follow this discussion in the next section.

The Hebrew concept of shalom needs to be addressed. Christianity in the first century was clearly a sect within Judaism. Thus, Christianity surely would have been influenced by Judaic concepts. Perry Yoder has offered a brief three-fold meaning of shalom.

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[27] ⨼ A P Ψ 33 81 181 326 1241 1962 2127 1[598] it[ar,c,x] Ambrose[1/2] Chrysostom Maximinus[acc to Augustine] Augustine Euthalius.

Shalom first of all refers to the "marked... presence of physical well-being and by the absence of physical threats like war, disease, and famine".[28] This concept of shalom takes the form of material prosperity, yet within the context of covenant relationship. Jeremiah 33.6-7, in presenting the "healing" restoration of Judah and Israel, wonderfully presents this meaning of shalom:

> (6) I am going to bring it recovery and healing; I will heal them and reveal to them abundance of prosperity and security. (7) I will restore the fortunes of Judah and the fortunes of Israel, and rebuild them as they were at first.

Note the primary clause in v.6a — the focus of the prophecy is God's healing and restoring of his people. The prosperity and security that follow are merely the result of the renewed covenantal relationship between Yahweh and his people. Verse 8 goes on to relate the cleansing from sin aspect of this shalom, as well as the resultant forgiveness of "all the guilt of their sin and rebellion against me". Harmonious relations are clearly present here, with a prosperity dimension included in the text.

The second meaning that Yoder outlines for shalom is "justice". This concept of divine justice and righteousness is closely connected to harmonious relationships — whether that be on the national level/international level, or the more personal level of friendships. Yoder states[29]:

> Just as war marked the outward absence of shalom between nations, injustice was the measure of the absence of shalom within a society.

> This close tie of shalom to justice is illustrated by its use as a parallel for justice/righteousness. For example, Isaiah 60:17 is part of a description of the prophet's hope for Israel's revived fortunes in the future.

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28   P. Yoder, *Shalom*, p. 13.
29   P. Yoder, *Shalom*, p. 14.

The final meaning of shalom that Yoder offers has an ethical or moral connotation. Being used as both the opposite of deceit and being blameless, shalom emphasizes integrity so as "to remove deceit and hypocrisy and to promote honesty, integrity, and straightforwardness".[30] Of significance in all three meanings of shalom is the idealistic world-view adopted — peace is the state of what things *should* be like, rather than as they necessarily are at present. Yoder also emphasizes that shalom functions in relation to all three meanings being inter-linked together.

The Hebrew concept of peace is closely connected to the covenantal concept of community. Although Gerhard Wehmeier rejects any equation between shalom and *brk*[31], Christopher W. Mitchell correctly refutes this separation by looking at the broader dimension of shalom[32]:

> In Deut 29: 18, the apostate considers himself blessed (*brk*, Hithpael) and thinks, "I will have *salôm*". *Salôm* denotes the prosperity, health, longevity, wealth, fertility, security, and peace promised by God in the covenantal blessings.

Of significance is the correlation between shalom and the relational order that occurs when the covenant is keep pure and is up held. Paul Kalluveettil, who sees shalom as "the wholeness of the relationship of communion between two parties"[33], relates shalom to the stipulations of covenantal contract. Kalluveettil contextualizes this observation by studying the Akkadian parallels

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30 P. Yoder, *Shalom*, p. 16.

31 Gerhard Wehmeier, *Der Segen im Alten Testament*. *Theologische Dissertationen* 6, Bo Reicke, ed., Basel: Friedrich Reinhardt, 1970, p. 140.

32 Christopher Wright Mitchell, *The Meaning of BRK "To Bless" in the Old Testament*. SBL-DS 95. Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1987, p. 182.

33 Paul Kalluveettil, *Declaration and Covenant*. *Analecta biblica* 88. Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1982, p. 34.

to shalom (i.e., *sal mum* (friendship/alliances) and *sulmum* (peace/well being)).[34]

This concept of shalom referring to a covenantal contract can be seen in the Roman concept of *pax* referring to a "pact" or agreement that functions to establish and maintain harmonious relations with both other humans and with the gods (*pax ueniaque deum*). As Cicero stated, "est enim pietas iustitia aduersum deos" ("piety is justice towards the gods").[35]

Another correlation between the Roman "peace" and shalom is that both entailed an emphasis on order over cosmic chaos. According to Robert Schilling, the Romans felt it essential to live in harmony with the heavenly realm. This entailed a meticulous care for order and structure. As Horace indicated, "dis te minorem quod geris, imperas" ("it is because you submit to the gods that you control (the world)").[36] Similarly, the ancient Hebrews connected shalom to order over against chaos. Paul D. Hanson states[37]:

> Israel, first of all, shared with her neighbors the basic view that the world was situated precariously between order and chaos. Order was construed as a life-enhancing condition which the creator God had effected by taming, or holding at bay, the unruly forces of chaos.

Thus, the Hebrew concept of peace and the Roman concept are conceptually similar in regard to various concepts. For early Christians to draw upon either concept would not be unusual given

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[34] P. Kalluveettil, *Declaration and Covenant*, pp. 35-42.

[35] Cicero, *De natura deorum* 1, 41. Cited from Robert Schilling, "The Roman Empire", in *Historia Religionum: Handbook for the History of Religions*. Vol. 1: Religions of the Past. C. Jouco Bleeker and Geo Widengren, eds., Leiden: Brill, 1969, p. 444.

[36] Horace, *Carmina* III, 6, 5. Cited from R. Schilling, "The Roman Religion", p. 445.

[37] Paul D. Hanson, "War and Peace in the Hebrew Bible", *Inter.* 38/4 (1984): 345.

the sociocultural setting of the Roman Empire and Diaspora Judaism. Indeed, a mixture of the two cultures surely would have been plausible given the dynamics of the first century. A cosmopolitan society was the matrix from which Christianity emerged and into which it expanded.

Furthermore, there was a great deal of Romanization that affected Palestine, which was preceeded by a controversial Hellenization. The fact the Greco-Roman culture caused intense sociological conflicts within Palestine (the rise of Zadokite protectionism; the Maccabean revolt; the various uprisings against the Herodian family and the Romans; and the religious reactions, such as Qumranic rejection of society), indicates the significance of the cultural dynamics that faced Palestinian self-definition.

The ancient Greek concept of peace is also parallel to the New Testament/Roman/Jewish concept of peace.[38] This is well presented in Aristophanes *The Peace*. This text was prepared near the end of the Peloponnesian war in *ca.* 421 B.C.E. The drama has Trygaeus, the hero, prepare and ride a giant dung beetle to the realm of the gods to try to persuade Zeus to cease the war currently ravaging Greece. Finding only Hermes, Trygaeus discovers that the goddess Peace has been sealed in a pit while War rages on earth. By cleverly praising Hermes, Trygaeus is able to free Peace and restore harmony to the world.

Several elements defining peace emerge from *The Peace*. Generally, peace refers to the absence of war or conflict. Peace is treated as the antithesis of War. Also, the deification of peace is a key element in Greek religion — one which the Romans drew upon.[39] The issue of mutual cooperation between combative

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[38] Cf. W. Klassen, *Love of Enemies*, pp. 12-26 for a good overview of the Greek concept of peace.

[39] S. Weinstock, "Pax and the 'Ara Pacis'", p. 44: "Pax was a late personification. Formally she depended on Greek Eirene who had been known since Hesiod, was often mentioned during the Peloponnesian War, and received a statue in Athens at that time".

factions is best presented when the characters are unable to pull the stone away to free Peace (470-485). It is not until they work together in harmony that they are able to move the stone (500-520). Also, there is a strong emphasis on contrasting the agrarian social system with the military-political system. The farmer is praised for fertility and productivity — which is allied with Peace. Those who profit from warfare (merchants, soldiers, and politicians) are seen as self-serving and socially destructive. They are allied with War.

This dualistic appreciation for fertility can be seen in the Jewish concept of Yahweh's blessing. Even among the Romans the civil wars caused a desire for peace, which entailed fertility (Virgil, *Eclogues* 4, 37-45). As John Dominic Crossan stated[40]:

> But at this stage, peace is peace for all the world in a golden age of fertility without toil and prosperity without strife. And that, of course, is still the vision that, over twenty-five years later, the *Ara Pacis* sculptures froze in stone for all who passed to see.

> Once again mythology took over. It was not now a peaceful mythology of the fertile earth. It was rather a vision in which civil war between Octavian and Anthony, twinned Roman warlords, was transmuted into Octavian leading the hosts of the civilized West against Anthony, or better Cleopatra, and the hordes of the barbarian East.

Thus, according to Crossan, a shift occurred in the Roman concept of peace away from a fertility component.

The Roman "*Pax*" was merely the most prominent expression of concepts that were recognized throughout the ancient world, including Palestine. The Herodians, Hasmonians and the Hellenistic powers that dominated Palestine attest to this, as would the Jewish Zealot concept of peace — a peace of concordia; not to

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[40] John Dominic Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant*. San Francisco: Harper, 1993, p. 39.

the Roman emperor, but to the God of Israel. The philosophical and religious expressions of *Pax Romana* were not limited to the streets of Rome, but, as archaeology has shown, religious sects (including emperor worship) were widespread in this multicultural/cosmopolitan empire — a reality which Palestine was not excluded from.[41]

Transcultural approach

Throughout this study, an emphasis has been placed on the *Pax Romana* as the cultural matrix from which the early Christians developed their concept of peace. The Roman culture was obviously widespread and influential. As Christianity emerged out of a Jewish matrix, this study has briefly looked at the Jewish concept of Shalom. It has also briefly looked at the third major cultural influence that Christianity functioned within — the Hellenistic culture. Yet none of these milieus adequately encompasses first century Mediterranean culture.

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[41] See, for example, Peter Richardson's "Religion, Architecture and Ethics. Some First Century Case Studies" (*Horizons in Biblical Theology* 10/2 (Dec. 1988): 19-49), where he explores the ethical implications of religious architecture. Also see H. W. Pleket's excellent article "An Aspect of the Emperor Cult: Imperial Mysteries" (*HTR* 58:4 (Oct. 1965): 331-47), where the connection between mysteries and the Imperial Cult in Asia is explored. The presence of domestic altars is also significant; cf. P. Veyne's "Les honneurs posthumes de Flavia Domitilla...", *Latomus* 21 (1962): 71.

According to Jane Schneider, the Mediterranean is "a friendly sea surrounded by a hostile landscape".[42] This observation correctly indicates the cultural co-dependence of the various Mediterranean societies. As has been argued by John Davis, Jeremy Boissevain and David Gilmore, the Mediterranean region needs to be seen as a culturally unified intranational region.[43] According to Gilmore, geo-environmental approaches to a Pan-Mediterranean focus in anthropology do not adequately explain the dynamics of the Mediterranean region. Rather, an ecological method is a better beginning point. This includes both climate and topography. As Gilmore states: "Faced with virtually identical ecological problems, Mediterranean peoples have indeed responded historically in like ways".[44] Gilmore also explored the more controversial culturological approaches. Of significance are the religious and ritualistic applications of these methods[45]:

> Religious and ritual factors, which one would think so dissimilar, have also been seen as providing correspondences... Furthermore, religion plays an important institutionalized political role in both north and south, as do priests, saints, and holy men.

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42 Jane Schneider, "Of Vigilance and Virgins: Honor, Shame and Access to Resources in Mediterranean Societies", *Ethnologist* 9 (1971): 3.

43 John Davis, *The People of the Mediterranean: An Essay in Comparative Social Anthropology* (Library of Man. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977); Jeremy Boissevain, et *al*., "Toward an Anthropology of the Mediterranean", *Current Anthropology* 20 (1979): 81-93; David Gilmore, ed., *Honor and Shame and the Unity of the Mediterranean* (Special Publication of the AMA 22. Washington, D.C.: AMA, 1987; *idem*, "Anthropology of the Mediterranean Area", *Annual Review of Anthropology* 11 (1982): 175-205; also cf. John Dominic Crossnan's discussion of these works in his *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (San Francisco: Harper, 1991), pp. 4-9.

44 D. Gilmore, "Anthropology of the Mediterranean Area", p. 178.

45 D. Gilmore, "Anthropology of the Mediterranean Area", p. 179.

The ecological make-up of the Mediterranean region caused an interactive cultural setting that can be called a transcultural setting. Thus, the concept of peace would not have been limited to one social setting, but would have emerged as a transcultural concept that found its particular place in the sub-cultural settings of Rome, Greece, Palestine, and so forth.

The dynamics of this transcultural setting can be explained by Thomas Kuhn's multi-paradigm theory of micro-, meso- and macro-paradigms.[46] Micro-paradigms comprise such community world-views/social perceptions as the Sadducees, Pharisees (Hillelites and Shammaites), Essenes, Qumran sectarians, Herodians, Hasmoneans, the various Zealot factions (such as the Sicarii). Each of these sects form their own social setting and communal perception of the rest of the world. Together they comprise Palestinian Judaism, which is representative of a meso-paradigm. The Jewish meso-paradigm functions as its own multi-paradigmic social setting. Judaism is composite in nature. The Jewish meso-paradigm contributes to the larger macro-paradigm of the Roman Empire/Mediterranean society. The other cultural groups within the Empire also function (micro or meso) as contributing elements in the formation of the cultural fabric of the macro-paradigm. The various levels (all of which could easily be stratified further) interact due to ecological factors affecting the reliocultural, sociocultural, and economical dynamics of each cultural entity.

As (Blumerian) symbolic interactionism has taught, "we know things by their meanings, that meanings are created through social interaction, and that meanings change through interaction".[47]

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[46] Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979.

[47] Gary Alan Fine, "The Sad Demise, Mysterious Disappearance, and Glorious Triumph of Symbolic Interactionism", *Annual Review of Sociology* 19 (1993): 64. See Herbert Blumer, *Symbolic Interactionism: Perspective and Method*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1969.

The transcultural nature of the Mediterranean region emerges from the anthropological interaction of the various societies as they faced similar ecological/sociological struggles and settings. Gilmore has argued that the unity of the Mediterranean region does not "devolve from a simple inventory of shared traits", but rather from "a similar dynamic, often contradictory, 'fit' *among* these traits".[48]

Given this Pan-Mediterranean setting, the New Testament concept of peace must not be studied in isolation from the sociocultural matrix within which early Christianity developed. Thus, the New Testament concept of peace is a transcultural concept that is best studied from the contextual perspective of the Greco-Roman world of the first two centuries C.E. As with other cultural elements in the Mediterranean world, peace took a particular form/manifestation due to contextual variations (e.g., geographical, political, religious, social stratification). For the New Testament, the sectarian nature of the early Christian communities resulted in the element of imperium taking an apocalyptic form, where submission of outsiders was ontologically projected onto a God figure. The larger Roman setting, however, was able to express this same element of imperium through the violent usage of Roman legions. Each held the same concept of peace (transculturally), yet manifested this concept individually (dependant on specific settings).

Conclusion

The purpose of this study has been to determine whether the New Testament/early Christian concept of peace can be understood in the context of the *Pax Romana*. Beginning with a methodological discussion, it was found that the scholarly approach to Biblical peace studies suffered from a theological premise emphasizing the peace promoting elements of the New

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[48] D. Gilmore, "Anthropology of the Mediterranean Area", p. 200. Gilmore states: "The most dramatic affinities within the Pan-Mediterranean region are not structural but psychocultural and psychosexual" (p. 197).

Testament texts. This observation called for a culturally oriented approach to the issue. Thus, six elements of the *Pax Romana* were presented and then compared with the New Testament writings. Illustrative examples were given that indicated a correlation between the New Testament and the Roman *pax*. Whereas the Roman peace was centered on the Emperor as *soter*, the early Christians saw Jesus Christ as the source and protector of peace. Thus, while there are significant differences between the two concepts of peace, conceptually they are parallel to each other.

A brief survey of the Jewish and Greek concepts of peace offered a broader cultural perspective for this study. The Jewish, Greek, Roman and Christian perceptions of peace were not wholly different — though clearly not wholly the same. A transcultural approach to the Mediterranean region (a Pan-Mediterranean milieu) explained the correspondence of these cultural groups. An interactive dynamic existed in the first century which drew the various cultural components of the Roman Empire together.

As a result of this study, the antithetical relationship that scholarship has drawn between the Christian peace and the *Pax Romana* can not be held. Rather, a close cultural connection must be seen between the Christian peace and the Roman peace.

SOMMAIRE

LA PAX *ROMAINE ET LA «PAIX» DU NOUVEAU TESTAMENT*

La paix constituait un concept important pour les premiers chrétiens. Le fait que le terme ειρενε, ou d'autres qui lui sont apparentés, apparaisse exactement cent fois dans le Nouveau Testament démontre clairement l'importance de la «paix» pour les communautés chrétiennes primitives. Mon but, dans cet article, est de replacer le concept de paix tel qu'il apparaît dans le

Nouveau Testament à l'intérieur du contexte culturel de la *pax* romaine.

Cet article par une courte discussion méthodologique. Plusieurs difficultés d'ordre méthodologique sont en effet apparues dans les études qui se sont penchées sur le concept chrétien primitif de paix. L'approche savante des études bibliques qui portent sur la paix se trouve biaisée par une prémisse théologique insistant sur les éléments promoteurs de la paix dans les textes du Nouveau Testament. Cette observation nous force à envisager une approche du problème basée sur la culture. Après avoir abordé ces questions au plan de la méthode, je présente donc six éléments de base constitutifs de la *Pax Romana*. Je me sers de l'analyse qu'a faite Stefen Weinstock du culte de la *Pax* ainsi que de l'*Ara Pacis* comme base pour mes définitions dans l'établissement de ces éléments. Chacun de ceux-ci est ensuite comparé aux textes du Nouveau Testament où je puise des exemples pour illustrer l'existence d'une corrélation entre le concept de paix néo-testamentaire et celui de la *pax* romaine. Alors que la paix romaine est basée sur la personne de l'Empereur considéré comme *soter*, les premiers chrétiens voient quant à eux en Jésus-Christ la source de la paix et son protecteur. Par conséquent, et même s'il existe des différences considérables entre les deux concepts de paix, on peut au plan conceptuel tracer entre eux un parallèle.

Je donne ensuite, à travers un bref tour d'horizon des concepts de paix juif et grec, une perspective culturelle plus large à mon étude. Les Juifs, les Grecs, les Romains et les chrétiens ne percevaient pas la paix d'une façon totalement différente, même si elle n'était manifestement pas entièrement identique. J'explique la correspondance qui existe entre ces divers groupes culturels au moyen d'une approche transculturelle de la région méditerranéenne (l'existence d'une matrice socio-culturelle pan-méditerranéenne au sein de laquelle cette notion de paix jouait le rôle de concept transculturel). En effet, il existait au premier siècle une dynamique interactive qui rapprochait les différentes composantes culturelles de l'Empire romain.

À la suite de cette étude, je ne peux retenir l'hypothèse d'une relation antithétique entre la paix chrétienne et la *Pax Romana* telle que l'ont émise certains spécialistes. Nous devons plutôt considérer qu'il existait un lien culturel étroit entre les deux.