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Paul's Spirit of Peace: A Study in Biblical Theology

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Abstract

Paul's Spirit of Peace, a Study in Biblical Theology discusses the central role of peace in the New Testament, with a particular attention given to Pauline writings, and argues that this peace is a work of the Spirit. The chosen methodology is rhetorical-, discourse-, and social analysis. The dissertation shows that the main problem Paul was facing was unresolved conflicts, in other words lack of peace with God and between groups and individuals in the Pauline congregations.

Εἰρήνη is suggested to be the main purpose of communication not only in the Pauline literature but in the non-Pauline New Testament documents as well. *Πνεῦμα* establishes, maintains, and intensifies harmonious relationships. The nature of these relationships is *εἰρήνη*. Though every letter is contingent and was born in different circumstances, *εἰρήνη* is realised by *πνεῦμα* in a way that the exact circumstances and problems find a solution that has eternity in view as well as the present relationship with God and the fellow-believer. Reconciliation with God in Christ by the Spirit leads into a life of peace with God and also needs to lead to a life of peace with people by the transforming work of the Spirit.

The beginning point in Galatians, Chapter Two of the thesis, and Romans, Chapter Three, is Paul's greeting. It is suggested that this was not just a simple greeting but part of the *πρόθεσις* and therefore indicating the main purpose of writing. The main problem in Galatians and Romans is explained as being conflicts, lack of *εἰρήνη*. This problem is solved by *πνεῦμα*, but requires the active collaboration of the believer in Christ.

Chapter Four suggests that also in Paul's other undisputed letters *εἰρήνη* is the main purpose of writing and that *πνεῦμα* plays an essential role in its realisation. Chapter Five proposes that the disputed Pauline letters and the non-Pauline New Testament documents follow the same principle, although using *πνεῦμα* less frequently. In the Gospels and Acts, Jesus carried out the messianic ministry by the power of the Spirit in order to accomplish his peace mission and this was continued by his disciples after the resurrection and intensified experience of the Spirit at Pentecost. The non-Pauline epistles express the same essential idea as the Pauline epistles in that peace is established by the Spirit when the people of God seek harmonious relationships and participate actively in resolving conflicts. This peace is conditional and requires the positive human reaction to God's offer of peace and the constant walk by the Spirit in order to live harmonious relationships with people as well.

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Abbreviations

AA	American Anthropologist
ACCS	Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture
AP	The Advocate of Peace
AYB	Anchor Yale Bible
AYBD	Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary
BBR	Bulletin for Biblical Research
BCBC	Believers Church Bible Commentary
BECNT	Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament
BLT	Brethren Life and Thought
BNTC	Black's New Testament Commentaries
BR	Biblical Research
BZNV	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft
CBNT	Commentaire Biblique Nouveau Testament
CBQ	The Catholic Biblical Quarterly
CCS	Cambridge Classical Studies
CDWGTB	Strong, James. <i>A Concise Dictionary of the Words in the Greek Testament and the Hebrew Bible</i> . Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2009.
CEBT	Contributions to Biblical Exegesis & Theology
CJ	Concordia Journal
COQG	Christian Origins and the Question of God
CPNIVC	The College Press NIV Commentary
CPW	Collected Pacifist Writings
CRBR	Critical Review of Books in Religion
CSRFS	Routledge Series in Federal Studies
CULDC	Cornell University Library Digital Collections
CV	The Classical Review
DSD	Dead Sea Discoveries
EBC	The Expositor's Bible Commentary
EC	Early Christianity
ESEC	Emory Studies in Early Christianity
GP	Guides for the Perplexed
HALOT	Koehler, Ludwig, and Walter Baumgartner. <i>The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> . Edited and translated by M. E. J. Richardson. Leiden: Brill, 1994–2000.
HBT	Horizons in Biblical Theology

Chapter I: Paul's Spirit of Peace

Introduction

Paul of Tarsus was once raging against the church, then he became a preacher of the gospel of Jesus Christ, or shall we say of the gospel of peace?¹ Who was this man and what precisely was his essential message? Negatively speaking, 'Paul was not a Christian,'² answers Pamela Eisenbaum, a statement that has found both good reception and rejection among Pauline scholars. Whether shocked or pleased, we can possibly come to a peaceful Jewish-Christian dialogue about the apostle to the Gentiles if we grant that the term *Χριστιανός* came into common use only after Paul's physical departure. But we also need to understand that, during his lifetime, the Pauline *ἐκκλησίαι* were considered part of Judaism, a Jewish sect, and that Paul himself remained a Jew during his whole life. In this sense, among others, the radical new perspective³ on Paul is right in that he did not undergo a conversion, but rather received a 'call,'⁴ a term that Paul uses himself, for example in Gal 1:15. And yet we might still speak of a conversion, particularly if Alan F. Segal's terminology, which seems to be useful from the perspective of a social-scientific approach, is applied where there is a radical change and 'a move to a socially stigmatized group.'⁵ Seeing no contraction between these two terms, Segal uses a third term, 'transformation,'⁶ also part of

¹ Isa 52:7 and Ross Wagner's discussion in Ross Wagner, *Heralds of the Good News: Isaiah and Paul in Concert in the Letter to the Romans*, NovTSup 101 (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 171–175.

² Pamela Eisenbaum, *Paul Was Not a Christian: The Original Message of a Misunderstood Apostle* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2009), 1–9.

³ After the new perspective on Paul with scholars such as E. P. Sanders, James D. G. Dunn, and N. T. Wright correcting the mistaken view that Judaism at Paul's time was a religion of legalism, the radical new perspective with scholars such as Pamela Eisenbaum, Lloyd Gaston, John Gager, Stanley Stowers, Neil Elliott, and Mark Nanos suggests that Paul never ceased to be a Torah observant Jew and that Jesus Christ came to save the Gentiles, while the Jews continued to be saved by Torah. Paul's negative rhetoric about the Torah was therefore intended only for Gentiles, not for Jews.

⁴ Alan F. Segal, *Paul the Convert: The Apostolate and Apostasy of Saul the Pharisee* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 12; Rom 4:17; 8:30; 9:7, 12, 24, 25, 26; 1 Cor 1:9; 7:15, 17, 18, 20, 21, 22, 24; 10:27; 15:9; Gal 1:6, 15; 5:8, 13; 1 Thess 2:12; 4:7; 5:24.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 72–73.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 283, 285; Rom 2:20; 8:29; 12:2; 2 Cor 3:18; Gal 4:19; Phil 2:6, 7; 3:10, 21.

Paul's own terminology. Paul's experience was then a transformation of a Jewish apocalyptic mystic⁷ type, rather unique for that period of Judaism.⁸

Paul might have been influenced by the type of mystic Judaism⁹ found for example in 1 and 2 Enoch,¹⁰ predating Paul, but he further developed his own idea of transformation. However, we can agree with E. P. Sanders that Paul's transformation has more than 'just a mystical sense.'¹¹ Paul's transformation would lead into a ministry that seems to be focused on Gentiles but does not exclude Jews. Paul's message is what he calls *εὐαγγέλιον* (Gal 1:6–9; Rom 1:16–17). This is also the concept that Isaiah, one of Paul's favourite authors, used for his message. Is there any link between Isaiah's and Paul's *εὐαγγέλιον*? What about those who preached another *εὐαγγέλιον*? How does Paul relate to them and what are the differences in content and effect regarding these different messages? If Isaiah clearly has a Jewish readership in mind, does this message, for Paul, also apply to Gentiles?

It is useful to speak about a conversion, because this is Paul's experience seen from an etic perspective, and it is useful to speak about transformation or call, because this is Paul's experience seen from an emic perspective. Both perspectives viewed in balance are complementary rather than mutually exclusive and give a more holistic understanding of Paul's experience as a psychological,

⁷ It seems that there is wide acceptance today that 'Paul had an apocalyptic worldview,' Ben C. Blackwell, John K. Goodrich, and Jason Maston, eds., 'Paul and the Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction,' in *Paul and the Apocalyptic Imagination*, ed. Ben C. Blackwell, John K. Goodrich, and Jason Maston (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2016), 3; Bert Jan Lietaert Peerbolte defines, 'Apocalyptic texts seem to be influenced by a dualistic perception of the world and history, which is taken up in a counter-narrative against imperial domination (Portier-Young 2011; Collins 2015: 289–307). The idea that the present age cannot be redeemed unless it is replaced by a new creation is a step away from older characterisations in which the world could be renewed (see, e.g., Isa chs. 65–66). Especially the "sectarian" documents in Qumran indicate a division of the world into two realms: the realm of God/Michael/the Anointed One(s)/the Sons of Light and the realm of Belial/evil/the Sons of Darkness (see, e.g., 1QM xiv 8–10; 1QS iv 18–23; CD A viii 2; outside Qumran: T. Jud. 25:3; T. Levi 3:3; 18:12; T. Dan 5:10–11; T. Zeb. 9:8; T. Benj. 3:8; Sib. Or. 3.63–74, 154–173),' Bert Jan Lietaert Peerbolte, 'Antichrist,' in *T&T Clark Encyclopedia of Second Temple Judaism*, ed. Daniel M. Gurtner and Loren T. Stuckenbruck (London: T&T Clark, 2020), 2:31; See the list of literature in footnote 2 of Daniel Marguerat, 'Paul the Mystic,' in *Paul, John and Apocalyptic Eschatology: Studies in Honour of Martinus C. de Boer*, NovTSup 149, ed. Jan Krans, Bert Jan Lietaert Peerbolte, Peter-Ben Smit and Arie Zwiep (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 76–93.

⁸ Segal, *Paul the Convert*, xii.

⁹ Albert Schweitzer, *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle*, trans. William Montgomery, 3rd ed. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998); Bert Jan Lietaert Peerbolte, *Paulus en de rest: Van farizeeër tot profet van Jezus* (Zoetermeer: Meinema, 2010), 97–99.

¹⁰ Segal, *Paul the Convert*, 47–48.

¹¹ E. P. Sanders, *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 188.