DISSERTATION SUMMARY

An Analysis of the Concept of 'Peacemaking Through Blood' in Colossians 1:20b: The Graeco-Roman and Jewish Background[1]

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This study investigates which conceptual frames, or scenarios, the metaphorical expression εἰρηνοποιήσας διὰ τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ σταυροῦ αὐτοῦ in Colossians 1:20b might have evoked in the minds of the implied readers, and how those frames contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of peacemaking through blood in Colossians. Insights from cognitive linguistics, especially from frame semantics and conceptual metaphor theory, are applied in order to assess the potential frames triggered by the metaphorical expressions. The overall thesis is that εἰρηνοποιήσας διὰ τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ σταυροῦ αὐτοῦ had the potential to activate various frames available to the conceptual system of the readers in Asia Minor – frames from both the Graeco-Roman and Jewish conceptual worlds – which enabled them to grasp the meaning and nature of the peace achieved by Christ on the cross.

After the introductory chapter, the study is divided into two parts, investigating Colossians 1:20b on the basis of the Graeco-Roman conceptual world (chapters 2 and 3) and the Jewish conceptual world (chapters 4 to 6). Chapter 2 investigates the *pax romana* as a viable Graeco-Roman frame for the interpretation of peacemaking through blood in Colossians. The imperial ideal

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1. Diego dy Carlos Araújo, 'An Analysis of the Concept of 'Peacemaking Through Blood' in Colossians 1:20b: The Graeco-Roman and Jewish Background' (PhD diss., London School of Theology, 2021). Supervisor: Dr Tim Carter.

and propaganda of the *pax romana* encompassed a wide range of life within the Roman empire, including political and religious aspects. However, the peace it promised meant different things for different strata of society. According to the perspective 'from below' (the majority), it meant the imposition of Roman ways and the pacification of erstwhile enemies. In its essence, the Augustan peace was a 'peace through victory' (*parta victoriis pax*), so 'peace through violence'. Another important aspect of the concept of the *pax romana* was its inextricable connection with the *pax deorum* ('peace of the gods'), which was understood as the necessary precondition for the former. This dynamic was marked by the deep feeling of anxiety in face of the divine (*Weltangst*) characteristic of first-century Hellenistic and Roman religious experience. An extract from the Roman poet Catullus is analysed as an illustration of this relationship. The Jewish writer Philo of Alexandria is also adduced as evidence of the pervasiveness of the *pax romana* ideology. The evidence for the presence of Augustan peace ideology in first-century Asia Minor is also examined, establishing the availability of this frame for the readers of Colossians. In light of the evidence, the chapter concludes that the metaphorical expression εἰρηνοποιήσας διὰ τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ σταυροῦ αὐτοῦ in Colossians 1:20b could indeed have evoked the conceptual frame of the *pax romana* in the minds of those familiar with it, equipping them to make sense of the linguistic units.

Building on the findings of the previous chapter, chapter 3 examines how the *pax romana* frame could have informed the readers' understanding of εἰρηνοποιήσας διὰ τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ σταυροῦ αὐτοῦ in Colossians 1:20b, and challenged their perception of reality. The cumulative weight of frame elements from the Roman world present in Colossians heightens the probability of the activation of the *pax romana* frame by the idea of peacemaking through blood in Colossians. The triumph metaphor in Colossians 2:15 is the clearest frame from the Roman conceptual world. The writer of Colossians uses it to convey the concept of 'imposed peace', or 'pacification by subjugation', as he depicts the pacification and subjugation of τὰς ἀρχὰς καὶ τὰς ἐξουσία (Col 2:15). So, within the literary context of Colossians, the triumph metaphor complements and fleshes out the element of pacification by subjugation *vis à vis* the spiritual powers already introduced by the concept of peacemaking through blood in Colossians 1:20b. This suggests that the participial phrase εἰρηνοποιήσας διὰ τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ σταυροῦ αὐτοῦ in Colossians 1:20b is not – in following 1:20a – tautologous. Instead, it adds a distinctive nuance (i.e. pacification) to the concept of reconciliation as found in the other three instances of reconciliation language in the earlier Pauline letters (Rom 5:1-11; 2 Cor 5:11-21) and Ephesians 2:11-22. The combined imagery of Colossians 1:20b and 2:15

subverts the readers' expectations and challenges their perception of reality in at least three areas: the standing of the powers *vis à vis* God, the believers' standing *vis à vis* the powers, and the identity and character of the bringer of peace.

Part two of the thesis (chs 4–6) considers which frames the metaphorical expressions of reconciliation (Col 1:20a) and peacemaking through blood (Col 1:20b) could have activated in the minds of Jewish readers. These chapters argue that whereas the reconciliation language of Colossians 1:20a could potentially trigger the Old Testament *rîb*-pattern frame, peacemaking through blood had the potential to activate the frame of the offering of the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 52:13–53:12 (hereafter Isaiah 53). The Maccabean martyrology, closely related to Isaiah 53, is also proposed as another possible frame.

Chapter 4 lays the groundwork by outlining the main elements of the *rîb*-pattern. Pietro Bovati's work on Old Testament legal procedures is used as the primary dialogical partner.[2] The investigation reveals that the *rîb*-pattern is a conceptual frame widely used in Jewish literature to conceptualise Israel's relationship with God, the disruption of this relationship, and its restoration. (This can also be called 'prophetic *rîb*-pattern' or 'covenant controversies'.) The aim of a *rîb* dispute within God's covenantal community is ultimately reconciliation – the restoration of a broken relationship. This is an important realisation, for it reveals that although the theological use of the ἀλλασσ-word-group is not found in the LXX, the concept of theological reconciliation is clearly present. The conclusion that the *rîb*-pattern is a widespread frame justifies the proposal that it might have informed the way first-century Jews conceptualised peacemaking through blood in Colossians 1:20b.

Chapter 5 examines both the prophetic *rîb*-pattern in Isaiah 40–55 and the Maccabean martyrology of 2 and 4 Maccabees. The selection of these traditions was determined by the linguistic and conceptual parallels with the message of reconciliation/peacemaking in Colossians, as explored in chapter 6. The argument demonstrates that the exodus provides an overarching frame in Isaiah 40–55 for conceptualising YHWH's deliverance of Israel, within which other more specific frames are introduced, such as the *rîb*-controversy frame. Interpretation in the light of the divine lawsuit frame in Isaiah 40–55 leads to the conclusion that the violent shedding of the Servant's blood (Isaiah 53) can be construed as the compensatory offering that opens the way for forgiveness, which in turn results in the reconciliation of captive Israel (Isa 53:5), as well as

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2. Pietro S. J. Bovati, *Re-establishing Justice: Legal Terms, Concepts and Procedures in the Hebrew Bible*, trans. Michael J. Smith, JSOTSup 105 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1994).

the restoration of the cosmos. The Maccabean martyrdom tradition represents a further development of the Jewish conceptualisation of the death of an innocent righteous individual vicariously bearing the sins of others. This is proposed as evidence that Jewish writers had already advanced the idea of the effectiveness of 'animal sacrifice' to incorporate the concept of a 'human death' offered vicariously. Thus interpreted, the Maccabean martyrology represents a milestone in such a paradigm shift. The chapter concludes by proposing that both the Isaiah 53 and the Maccabean martyrdom frames had the potential to be activated by the metaphorical expression εἰρηνοποιήσας διὰ τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ σταυροῦ αὐτοῦ in Colossians 1:20b.

The final chapter ties the conclusions of the previous two chapters together by interpreting the language of reconciliation/peacemaking through blood in Colossians in the light of both the divine controversy frame of Isaiah 40–55 and the Maccabean martyrology frame. It argues that the reconciliation metaphor (Col 1:20a) had the potential to activate the *rîb*-controversy frame more generally, and peacemaking through blood (Col 1.20b) had the potential to trigger the Isaiah 53 frame. The metaphors used to describe God's work of redemption through Christ in Colossians 1:12-14 set the scene by evoking the overarching frame of the second exodus, interpreted through the filter of Isaiah 40–55, which constitutes the narrative substructure undergirding the discourse in the larger unit of Colossians 1:12-23. God's act of reconciliation would have been interpreted as the fulfilment of the Isaianic promises, the ushering in of the 'new thing' prophesied in Isaiah 40–55. The effective means through which reconciliation with God is achieved is the violent bloodshed of Christ (Col 1:20b), which could have filled the slot of the gift, or compensation, 'the punishment that won our peace' (Isa 53.5) and the אָשָׁם (*asham*) offering of Isaiah 53:10. Closely connected with the Isaiah 53 frame is the Maccabean martyrology, which could also have informed the Jewish conceptualisation of peacemaking through blood in Colossians 1:20b. The chapter concludes by proposing three areas in which the combined imagery of Colossians 1:12-23 would have challenged readers' perception of reality: the cost and scope of peace, the scope of reconciliation (encompassing both forgiveness of sins and deliverance from spiritual powers), and fulfilment of the Isaianic universal peace.

The conclusion brings all the threads of the investigation together and leads to the reaffirmation of the initial hypothesis that the metaphorical expression εἰρηνοποιήσας διὰ τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ σταυροῦ αὐτοῦ had the potential to activate various frames, or scenarios, available to the conceptual system of the implied readers, enabling them to make sense of the metaphors. However,

the Colossians' version of peacemaking through blood is sharpened by the Christ-event, resulting in a reconfiguration that subverts the expectations of the readers and replaces them with something greater and better than anything they knew or could deduce from the conceptual world they were familiar with. By applying insights from cognitive linguistics on metaphor and frame semantics, this work avoids a monolithic interpretation of Colossians 1:20, allowing exegesis to take into account the multicultural world within which both the writer and audience of Colossians lived. This approach highlights the importance of careful historical studies, and complements them by bringing to the interpreter's attention frames that could otherwise be missed.