

The Peace-Offerings (שלמים) and Pauline Soteriology

by Cheryl A. Brown

For generations, scholars have sought to trace the roots of the theology of the Apostle Paul as set forth in his epistles.¹ Some have understood him almost exclusively against a background of Gnosticism or Hellenistic mystery religions, emphasizing the parallels between the latter and Paul: a deity comes to earth, experiences death and resurrection; the members of the cult become one with that deity, experiencing ultimate salvation² by mysterious rites of initiation and sacred cult meals. One of the chief proponents of this view is Bultmann³ who traces much of Pauline theology and terminology to Gnosticism⁴ and the mystery cults.⁵

Other scholars caution against drawing too sharp a distinction between the Hellenistic and Jewish worlds of that period, and therefore against attributing

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1. There has been much scholarly debate over the question of Paul's authorship of certain epistles. In this paper I assume that Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians and Philemon are Pauline. For most purposes, however, the argument is unaffected if we view them as "Pauline" in the sense of belonging to the Pauline tradition, in contradistinction to other traditions in the New Testament (e.g., the Synoptic and Johannine traditions).
 2. W.D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism* (London, 1965), p. 89: "The union between the believer and the God issued in σωτηρία which consisted chiefly in escape from cruel fate and especially death."
 3. Cf. Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament* (London, 1959) and *Primitive Christianity in its Contemporary Setting* (Edinburgh, 1956). See also C.J.G. Montefiore, *Judaism and St. Paul* (London, 1914); H.J. Schoeps, *Paul: The Theology of the Apostle in the Light of Jewish Religious History* (Philadelphia, 1974); Leo Baeck, *Judaism and Christianity* (Philadelphia, 1958).
 4. "But Paul himself, obviously, also regards the Gnostic terminology as the appropriate form of expression..." Bultmann, *Theology*, p. 181.
 5. "Very soon [in the history of the Christian Church] views and concepts out of Hellenistic Syncretism, especially the mystery-religions, also show their influence." *Ibid.*, p. 84.

all of Paul's "innovations" in theology to his Hellenistic background. Davies points out the many ways in which Palestinian and Hellenistic Judaism meshed:

Palestinian Judaism is not to be viewed as a watertight compartment, closed against all Hellenistic influences; there was a Græco-Jewish atmosphere even at Jerusalem itself.... Thus, there is no justification for making too rigid a separation between Judaism of the Diaspora and that of Palestine, and particularly is this true in the case of a man like Paul whose home was, most probably, a bit of Jerusalem outside Palestine.⁶

Longenecker agrees:

If...we recognize the intermingling of Hebraic and Hellenistic orientation in Palestine and are prepared to emphasize those analogies which exist between Early Christianity and those Jewish antecedents of which it claims to be the fulfillment — without however, ignoring comparisons with features found in the non-Jewish world — a different state of affairs results. It is this latter procedure which I consider more historiographically valid and which recent discoveries have pressed upon us.⁷

Schweitzer, who places Paul in the context of the Jewish apocalyptic movement, also points out the dissimilarities between components of the mystery religions and Pauline theology. His viewpoint is taken up by Davies:

Hellenistic mysticism aims at union with God; its climax is seen as being deified. As Schweitzer has pointed out, this is the kind of "mysticism" that is impossible to Judaism; within Judaism the distinction between the Creator and the creature is never lost.⁸

Moreover, as Davies adds: "Paul never speaks of being deified as the Hellenistic mysteries do."⁹ "Union with Christ was for Paul no absorption into the divine such as is fundamental to the mystery religions."¹⁰

Davies also points out the difficulty in dating the origins of the mystery cults,¹¹ the lack of connection between the member of the mystery cult and the "real world," the extreme individualism of the mystery cults — as opposed to the Pauline model of believers together being members of the covenantal community, termed by Paul "the Body of Christ" — and the fact that the gods of the mystery cults were not "rooted and grounded in history, as was the Jesus whom Paul knew as the Risen Lord."¹²

6. Davies, p. 8.

7. Richard Longenecker, *The Christology of Early Christianity* (Naperville, 1970), pp. 125–26. The most important of these "recent" discoveries is, of course, that of the library of the sect at Qumran.

8. Davies, p. 14, citing Albert Schweitzer, *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle* (London, 1931), p. 37.

9. Davies, p. 15.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 91.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 90. We should probably date them later than the Pauline material.

12. *Ibid.*

Marcel Simon observes a further dissimilarity: "The Greek Savior-Gods don't suffer death to atone for the sins of man...their passion has no vicarious efficacy."¹³ He concludes:

The Pauline idea of redemption cannot therefore be traced back exclusively, despite affinities, to any pagan model. It must either be ascribed to Paul's own creative genius, or explained, at least in part, by some Jewish antecedent. It seems, in fact, impossible to understand Pauline soteriology and its most original features if one leaves Judaism completely aside.¹⁴

Just what are some of these "Jewish antecedents" in Paul's soteriology? Schoeps has suggested three major antecedents: 1) the atoning sufferings of the righteous,¹⁵ 2) the suffering Messiah,¹⁶ and 3) the expiatory character of the Binding of Isaac.¹⁷ Indeed, many have seen in Paul a soteriology based upon Jewish concepts of redemption and expiation. These concepts would most often be described in sacrificial terms, specifically "Passover" and "atonement." In this paper, however, I will demonstrate that he also conceives of it in terms of the Judaic peace-offerings.¹⁸

The Nature of the Peace-Offerings

To see why Paul might find in the peace-offerings (שלמים) a model for his soteriology, let us first briefly examine their nature in the Hebrew Bible and the intertestamental literature. They are first mentioned in Exodus 20:24, where Moses is enjoined to sacrifice "burnt offerings and peace-offerings," after giving the Decalogue to the people of Israel at Mount Sinai. God's promises accompany the fulfillment of this command (v. 24): "wherever I cause My name to be honored, I will come to you and bless you."

In a significant passage, Exodus 24:5–11, Moses "offered burnt offerings and sacrificed young bulls as peace-offerings to the Lord." This took place in the context of the ratification of the covenant at Mount Sinai: "Moses took the Book of the Covenant and read it to the people. They responded, 'We will do everything the Lord has said; we will obey'" (v. 7). Then the covenant is sealed "by the sprinkling of the blood of the covenant" upon the people (v. 8), following which "Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu and the seventy elders of

13. Marcel Simon, "On Some Aspects of Early Christian Soteriology," Eric J. Sharpe and John R. Hinnells eds., *Man and His Salvation* (Manchester, 1973), p. 263.

14. Ibid. So also Gary Lease, "Mithraism and Christianity," *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt*, Section 2, vol. 23, part 2 (Berlin, 1980), p. 1313: "In general, however, it is safe to say that most students of the first century C.E. see clearly in Jesus a Jewish creation without direct additions from elsewhere in the Near East."

15. Schoeps, pp. 128–134.

16. Ibid., pp. 134–141.

17. Ibid., pp. 141–148.

18. Besides "peace-offerings," שלמים is translated into English in various ways. The NIV renders it "fellowship-offerings." Ralph Marcus, the translator of Philo's *Supplement II: Questions and Answers on Exodus* (London, 1961), renders it "covenant-offerings" (p. 72). So also thinks Max Weiner — "The peace-offering is perhaps better translated a 'covenant-offering'" — in "Sacrifice," Isaac Landau ed., *The Universal Jewish Encyclopaedia* (New York, 1945), vol. 9, p. 307.

Israel went up [on the mountain] and saw the God of Israel. But God did not raise his hand against these leaders of the Israelites; they saw God and they ate and drank” (vv. 9–11).

In Deuteronomy 27:1–8, which in many respects parallels the Exodus 24 account,¹⁹ Moses commands the Israelites to “offer burnt offerings...to the Lord your God” (v. 6) and “sacrifice peace-offerings there, eating them and rejoicing in the presence of the Lord your God” (v. 7).

Three other passages refer to this offering being sacrificed in the context of renewal of the covenant: 2 Chronicles 29:31 and 33:16, and Jeremiah 17:26. Although they are technically תודות or thank-offerings, the *Encyclopaedia Judaica* states that in these cases they are “virtual synonyms of the peace-offering.”²⁰

Indeed, the thank-offering was one of many types of peace-offerings.²¹ Through it, the worshipper gave thanks to God for blessings already bestowed (Ps. 107:22), particularly for an act of deliverance, either temporal or spiritual. Psalm 116:13 states: “How can I repay the Lord for all his goodness? I will fulfill my vows; I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the Lord...I will sacrifice a thank-offering to you and call on the name of the Lord.” Again, in Jeremiah 33:11, the prophet envisions the people bringing thank-offerings to the house of the Lord in the messianic age as a joyful response to the blessings of cleansing from sin, healing and health, joy and peace²² (vv. 15–16). Perhaps this passage led Rabbi Phineas to declare that “in the time to come all sacrifice will be annulled, but that of thanksgiving will not be annulled, and all prayers will be annulled, but that of thanksgiving will not be annulled.”²³

Biblical texts indicate that the peace-offering was a convenantal meal in which the worshipper was related to both the Lord and fellow-Israelites.

Every peace-offering culminated in a communal meal. Except for the portion burned on the altar or assigned to the priest, the sacrificial animal was given to the offerer. He used it as food for a communal meal for himself, his family and also the Levite in his community (Deut. 12:12, 18, 19).²⁴

Through the common-meal sacrifice, the members of the family or gens (Sam. 20:6)...were brought into communion with God.... Again, God may be supposed to be the host at the sacrificial meal, since the gifts of which the meal has been prepared are his property and the house in which the assembly is held belongs to him (1 Sam. 10:22, Jer. 35:2). The participants

19. Some parallels are 1) the putting up of stones, 2) the building of an altar, 3) the reading from the Law, 4) the sacrificing of burnt and peace-offerings.

20. Anson Rainey, “Sacrifices,” *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, vol. 14, col. 604. In the case of Jeremiah 17:26, the sacrifice is offered more precisely as a symbol of repentance and restoration, which are, however, the essence of the renewal of the covenant. According to the Babylonian Talmud (Zevahim 7a), “a thank-offering is designated as a peace-offering.” Also, the words are used interchangeably in Leviticus Rabbah 9:6.

21. Cf. Lev. 7:12–13, 15; 22:29. The *Encyclopaedia Judaica* also lists several other types of peace-offerings.

22. Ibid.

23. Leviticus Rabbah 9:7.

24. Rainey, p. 603.

in the meal are actually invited by God according to Zeph. 1:7 and Ez. 39:17.²⁵

The sacrificial meals consisted of the meat of the peace-offering after the priests had taken their first portion, and a grain, bread and wine offering. For this reason the expression “eating and drinking” describes the meal in some passages. Apparently the meals were “in general, of joyful character, wine being freely indulged in.”²⁶ In Deuteronomy 27:7, the Israelites were enjoined to rejoice as they ate and drank in the presence of the Lord.

The fact that they are called the “peace-offerings” (שלמים, with roots in the Hebrew concept of שלום — *shalom*) is significant. Many Jewish commentators have attempted to explain this name. Some have suggested that through this offering the relationship between God and man is made complete.²⁷ Others, as I have noted, have emphasized the communal aspect of the meal. We must not forget that Israel was first and foremost a *community* of God, a people who derived their identity from the covenant between themselves and their God.

Their covenant with God involved a convenantal relationship with one another as well. A broken relationship with God necessarily resulted in a broken relationship with the other members of the convenantal community; a right (restored) relationship with God necessarily resulted in a right (restored) relationship with the other members of the convenantal community. Of course, the reverse was also true, for only in the context of this harmony with God could one experience the blessings of peace, joy, prosperity, health and well-being that constitute the multi-faceted concept of *shalom*.

The rabbis questioned why the peace offerings were always mentioned last. One response is recorded in Leviticus Rabbah: “Peace is the climax of all things.... When the Messianic King is to come, he will commence with peace.”²⁸ Similarly, it is taught that this Messianic King “will establish peace for them, and they will sit at ease and eat in Paradise.”²⁹

Also, the rabbis taught that the offering derived its name from the fact that “the name of God is Peace” (bShabbat 10b). They even taught that the stones of the altar (Deut. 27:5–6) bring peace between Israel and their Father in heaven. The אבנים שלמים were interpreted by R. Johanan b. Zakkai as “stones of peace” rather than “whole stones.”³⁰

25. Louis Grossman, “Peace-Offering,” *Jewish Encyclopedia*, vol. 9, p. 567. He adds: “Since the meal was a communion between human participants and also with God, it is obvious that God received cooked meat as did also the sacrificial guests. Gideon, in fact, pours the broth over the stone (Ju. 6:20). The concept that God enjoyed the sacrifice was deeply rooted in the minds of the people as is shown by the fact that even after the naive notions regarding sacrificial rites had disappeared, the sacrifice was still designated as “bread of God” (להם לזה) (Lev. 3:11)....”

26. *Ibid.*, p. 566.

27. *Ibid.*, p. 567. The adjective שלם means “complete” or “whole.”

28. Leviticus Rabbah 9:9.

29. Exodus Rabbah 25:7. A variant reading is: “He will set a table for them, and they will sit at ease and eat in Paradise.”

30. Mekhilta de-Rabbi Ishmael, *ba-hodesh* 2. Cf. Jacob Licht, “Peace,” *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, vol. 13. Cf. “Pereq Ha-Shalom” at the end of Tractate Neziqin. A few statements are these: “Great is peace, for God is called Peace” (Judg. 6:24); “the Messiah

Although the peace-offering generally accompanies a burnt offering or Passover offering, there is evidence that “as early as Ezekiel, the peace-offering had acquired the characteristic of atonement. In Ezekiel 45:15 — in a passage dealing with the restoration of the Temple and its cult — the people are commanded to offer special gifts...for the grain offerings, burnt offerings and peace-offerings to make atonement for the people.”³¹ It is easy to understand how this development took place, given the close tie throughout the Bible between the peace-offering and the burnt-offering.

An interesting development occurred when the Bible was translated into Greek. In the Septuagint, the peace-offering is given the name σωτήριον or σωτήριος, an adjectival form derived from σωτήρ — “savior.” This is not unusual, since the usage accords with good Greek. Σωτηρία (a third form) can carry the sense of “well-being,”³² although in the Bible it and the related verb σώζω most often translate the Hebrew word עֲשׂ (“help, liberation, salvation”) and its derivatives.³³

Throughout both the Bible and intertestamental literature, the Greek translation of עֲשׂ is σωτήριον and related forms.³⁴ Thus we see “that the LXX translators understood this mostly as a sacrifice of salvation, i.e., a sacrifice which brings salvation.”³⁵ This is a logical development, since peace with God and with one’s fellow in the covenantal community was the foundation of one’s well-being as well as deliverance from the divine punishment reserved for those outside the covenantal relationship. Here, however, we are examining only one aspect of the concept of “salvation,” namely, that of “peace” or “reconciliation,” together with all its derivative benefits, both in the individual and in the community.

“Peace” in the Hebrew Bible and the Second Temple Period

“Peace” is one of the primary themes of the Hebrew Bible. Those keeping the terms of the covenantal relationship with God are described as having

is called peace” (Is. 9:6); “Israel is called peace” (Zech. 8:12). Another statement is tied to the Exodus 24 passage: “Great is peace, for when Israel said ‘All the word which the Lord has spoken we will do’ [Ex. 24:3], God rejoiced in them, gave them the Law and blessed them with peace.”

31. Grossman, p. 567.

32. James Hope Mouton and George Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the New Testament* (London, 1963), p. 622; Liddell and Scott, *Greek English Lexicon* (Oxford, 1968), p. 1751; Werner Foerster and Georg Fohrer, σώζω σωτήρ σωτήριος, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 7, pp. 965 ff.

33. Cf. Foerster and Fohrer, p. 970. It is in the context of the latter usage that in the Hellenistic world “civic festivals called σωτηρία were sacrificial observances petitioning or commemorating the deliverance of the community from a major threat,” according to Willard G. Oxtoby, “Reflections on the Idea of Salvation,” *Man and His Salvation* (note 13 above), p. 20.

34. For a listing of references, see Hatch and Redpath, *Concordance to the Septuagint*, vol. 2.

35. It is also used in other expressions containing the word “peace.” An example is “Depart in peace,” with בְּשָׁלוֹם being translated μετὰ σωτηρίας (Gen. 26:31, 28:21, 44:17 and elsewhere).

“entered into peace with God” (Is. 57:2), while those in rebellion against Him “have no peace” (Is. 48:22) and are enjoined to “make peace with God” (Is. 27:5). Indeed, the covenant itself is termed the “Covenant of Peace” (Is. 54:10; Ez. 34:25 and 37:26). The word שלום is sometimes juxtaposed with other synonyms for salvation (e.g., צדק in Is. 60:17 and Ps. 85:10). In two passages, the Messiah is named the “Prince of Peace” and designated as one who “will be their peace” (Is. 7: and Mi. 5:2–5).

The theme becomes especially prominent in the intertestamental period. In the Ethiopic Book of Enoch,³⁶ the angel who accompanies Enoch on the various mystical journeys is called the “angel of peace” (40:8, 53:4, 56:7). In the opening section, the blessings of the righteous are enumerated:

But with the righteous he will make peace, and will protect the elect, and his mercy shall be upon them. And they shall all belong to God and they shall be prospered and they shall all be blessed. And he will help them all, and light shall appear to them and he will make peace with them. (1:8)

Again, “there shall be peace to the righteous in the name of the eternal Lord” (58:4; cf. 71:14–16, 105:2). The wicked, in contrast, “shall find no peace” (5:4); “they shall have no peace or forgiveness of sins” (12:6). So too, the watchers, who had sought to be released from the sentence of doom and judgment through Enoch’s intercession with God, were told: “You shall have no peace nor forgiveness of sin”(12:5).³⁷ Peace and salvation are juxtaposed in 99:10 and 13: “For they [the righteous] shall be saved...but the wicked shall have no peace.” In both cases “peace” is virtually synonymous with “salvation.”

We find the same idea in the Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs. The Messiah is called the “Star of Peace” (TJ 24:1), while the “angel of peace” “leads the righteous into eternal life” (TA 6:4–6; TB 6:21). The Messiah in the one instance, and the “angel” in the other, are instruments by which God effects eternal life, also a parallel concept to salvation. In the Testament of Dan there are further examples of this use of the word: “But you shall be in peace, having the God of Peace” (TD 5:2); “He shall bring you into his sanctuary and He shall give you peace” (TD 5:9); “And give them that call upon Him eternal peace” (5:11).

In the Book of Jubilees, as Rebecca blesses Jacob, she says, “...and may your seed rejoice and on the great day of peace, may it have peace” (25:20). Also, Abraham directs Isaac to keep from idolatry and to sacrifice peace-offerings (21:7) and thank-offerings (21:8).³⁸ The setting, of course, is a period much earlier than the first biblical reference to the offering, i.e., Exodus 20. In rabbinic thought, “Noahites brought peace offerings” (Leviticus Rabbah 9:6) in a yet ear-

36. For a complete listing, see “Peace” in the index of Charles, *Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament*, vol. 2.

37. See 12:6, 13:1, 16:4, 94:6, 99:13 and 103:8, where “You shall have no peace” stands alone as the sentence passed upon the wicked.

38. See also 22:1 ff. and 16:23.

lier setting, even predating the covenant with Abraham.³⁹ Yet again, the offering is associated with the ratification or renewal of a covenant, namely the covenant made by God with Noah.

Also, the people are commanded to “celebrate the feast of weeks in this month [the third month] once a year to renew the covenant every year” (6:17). An important element in the celebration of this feast was the sacrificing of the peace-offering.⁴⁰ Note that the renewal of the covenant is tied to the Noahide covenant (vv. 15 and 16), when according to Jubilees peace-offerings were sacrificed.

The terminology does not occur in 4 Ezra or in 2 Baruch. In the latter, however, we find a similar concept — reconciliation:⁴¹ “At all times make request perseveringly and pray diligently with your whole heart that the Mighty One may be reconciled to you” (84:10). We have seen that the sacrifice of peace-offerings was regularly associated with the ratification or renewal of the covenant with God, starting with the Bible. Baruch likewise commands the people to “repent and pray in order that God may be reconciled to you,” when commanding them to “remember the covenant of your fathers” (84:8), although not explicitly stating that they are to sacrifice peace-offerings.

The strong tie between peace-offerings and covenant is reflected in the English translation of *Philo's Questions and Answers on Exodus*, in which they are rendered “covenant-offerings”: “τὰ σωτήρια is the Septuagint rendering of שלמים, covenant-offerings.”⁴² This basic insight is corroborated by E.P. Sanders: “in the Second Temple Period, the covenant seems universally to be the principal soteriological category...and therefore membership in the covenant is salvific.”⁴³

“Peace” as a Pauline Soteriological Term

The *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* states that in Pauline thought, σωζω (the verb “to save” and its derivatives) is “primarily a future eschatological term.”⁴⁴ Although not all occurrences fit into this category, on the whole the evaluation is correct. Thus it follows that Paul used other terminology to express soteriological concepts which were not primarily eschatological.

One of these terms is “peace” (εἰρήνη). In several cases, his phraseology parallels that of the Bible and Second Temple literature. God is called the “God of Peace” (Rom. 15:33, 16:20; 1 Th. 5:23) or the “Lord of Peace” (2 Th. 3:16), and the Gospel is the “Gospel of Peace” (Eph. 6:15). Those who have been justified by faith are said to “have peace with God” (Rom. 5:1). Jesus is identified as “our peace” (Eph. 2:14,15),⁴⁵ through whom God “reconciled to

39. This probably accounts for the fact that in the Second Temple period, gentiles brought peace-offerings (mShekalim 3:12).

40. Lev. 23:19–20. There are also many references to this offering in the Mishnah.

41. The Hebrew word for “reconciliation” is השלמה, a *hiphil* or causative form of שלם.

42. Cf. note 18.

43. E.P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (London, 1977), pp. 39–40.

44. Foerster and Fohrer, p. 992.

45. Cf. Is. 9:6 and Mi. 5:2–5, as well as note 30. Pesiqta Rabbati 35 states: “Three days before the advent of the Messiah, Elijah will announce: ‘Peace has come to the world.’”

himself all things...by making peace through his (Jesus') blood, shed on the cross" (Col. 1:20).

The last reference contains another Pauline soteriological term — reconciliation. In respect of actual occurrences, it is more prominent than "peace." The latter, however, is the primary and more inclusive term, of which "reconciliation" merely expresses one aspect.

In Pauline usage, the righteous have been reconciled to God through Christ (2 Cor. 5:18, 19) — who was God's instrument in effecting this reconciliation (Rom. 5:10–11 and 11:15; Col. 1:20, 22) — and are thus reconciled to one another (Eph. 2:14–16) and given the "ministry of reconciliation" (2 Cor. 5:18, 19). The command to be reconciled to God in 2 Corinthians 5:20 resembles that of 2 Baruch 84:10: "Pray diligently with your whole heart that the Mighty One may be reconciled to you." In Romans 5:10–11, Paul writes that "those who have been reconciled to Him [God] shall be saved" (through Jesus' death and resurrection); though the salvation is eschatological ("saved from God's wrath," v. 9), it follows as the logical consequence of reconciliation.

These passages indicate that Paul, as Isaiah, Micah, Ezekiel and other biblical and intertestamental writers, conceived of salvation at least partly in terms of peace and reconciliation. In two major respects, however, Paul has been accused of diverging from Judaism: 1) the inclusion of the gentiles in the covenantal community; and 2) the sacrificial death of the Messiah, elsewhere identified as God Himself (e.g., Phil. 2:6–11), to effect this reconciliation both between God and humanity and between human beings. Both features of Pauline thought are expressed in a crucial passage in Ephesians (2:11–22):

For you who were gentiles by birth...were separated from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. But now, in Christ Jesus, you who were once far away have been brought near⁴⁶ through the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility,⁴⁷ by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God.... He came and preached peace to you who were far away [i.e., the gentiles] and peace to those who were near [i.e., the Jews].... Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household.

Many scholars build their case that Paul was a Hellenistic innovator who bases his soteriology on Gnosticism or mystery religions on these claimed divergences from Judaism. Although Paul probably borrowed some of his terminology from these sources, most of his ideas came directly from the Bible and Second Temple literature;⁴⁸ they are grounded in the biblical theme of

46. Cf. Is. 57:19.

47. This refers to the wall which divided the Court of the Gentiles from the Court of the Israelites in the Temple; cf. Josephus, *War* 5:193–94.

48. There are passages in the Bible and intertestamental literature which indicate that some Jews foresaw that gentiles would ultimately be united together with Israel in the

covenant and its relationship to the concepts surrounding the peace-offerings. For example, the notion of "the Body of Christ," often branded a Pauline innovation, is simply his way of expressing the oneness experienced by the covenantal community under the leadership of the Messiah. In 4 Ezra, likewise, the Messiah (God's Son)⁴⁹ is described as preexisting in heaven and surrounded by a community of "elect ones."⁵⁰

Schweitzer has demonstrated that this oneness with the Messiah, and with the other members of the covenantal community, was firmly rooted in Jewish apocalyptic literature.⁵¹ In his view, Paul understood this to have taken place already and to be taking place presently, rather than awaiting the establishment of the messianic kingdom. Its present fulfillment, however, is closely linked with the future one, as Flew has pointed out:

In fellowship with him now, they [the elect] have their guarantee of fellowship with the Son of Man hereafter. St. Paul takes up this conception of a corporate relationship of the community with Christ Himself and interprets it by what is misleadingly called his "Christ-mysticism."⁵²

The concepts of salvation and the peace-offering are so closely related that $\sigma\tau\eta\rho\iota\alpha$ translates שלמים in the Septuagint. Because Paul knew the Bible in both languages and was certainly aware of this, it is not difficult to understand how he came to see the peace-offering as a model or type of Jesus' salvific work. While he draws upon other types, such as the Passover Lamb (Eph. 1:7 and 1 Cor. 5:7) and the sin-offering (Rom. 3:25 and 5:9), none of these is so central in Pauline soteriology as the peace-offering. One could almost translate Ephesians 2:11 as: "He is our peace-offering, who has broken down the dividing wall...."

Paul is possibly not the only New Testament author to make this connection. In the Nunc Dimittis (Lk. 2:29–32), Simeon, upon seeing the infant Jesus in the Temple, exclaims: "Now Lord, let Your servant depart in peace, according to Your word. For my eyes have seen Your salvation which You have prepared before the face of all people, a light to lighten the gentiles and the glory of

messianic age. E.P. Sanders, however, who has extensively surveyed the literature, concludes that with the exception of 4 Ezra, membership in the covenant is the condition for salvation. See Sanders in Robert Hamerton-Kelly and Robin Scroggs, *Jews, Greeks and Christians* (Leiden, 1976), p. 39. For a Jewish response to the Pauline doctrine that Jesus was divine, see Schoeps, p. 149: "The radically un-Jewish element in the thought of the Apostle was exalting the Messiah beyond all human proportions to the status of real divinity. This comes from heathen mythological conceptions, filtered through Hellenistic syncretism of the time."

49. This term merely denotes one who is chosen for a special task, rather than the Christian doctrine of the divinity of the Messiah.

50. Cf. Charles, p. 558, commenting on verse 14:9: "For you shall be taken up from [among] men and henceforth you shall remain with My Son, and with such as are one like you [the righteous], until the times be ended." There are also suggestions in Philo that the patriarchs were preexistent, or even deified. See also Enoch 7:15–16 and 62:14; TN 8:2; TA 7:7; TB 10:11.

51. Schweitzer, *op. cit.*

52. R.N. Flew, *Jesus and His Church* (London, 1938), p. 80, quoted in Davies, p. 102.

Your people Israel.” Luke designates Jesus not merely as one who brings salvation, or as Savior (cf. Lk. 2:11), but as “salvation” itself.⁵³ There may be an echo of this and/or a word play in Luke 19:9, when Jesus tells Zacchaeus: “Today salvation has come to this house.”

The Peace-Offerings and the Lord’s Supper

We have seen that peace-offerings were sacrificed at the ratification or renewal of the covenant. Similarly, Paul associates the salvific work of Jesus with the ratification of a new covenant. What he alludes to in Ephesians 2:11–22, he explicitly states in 1 Corinthians 11:25, when recalling Jesus’ words at the institution of the Lord’s Supper: “This is the cup of the new covenant in my blood.”

We can trace even “problematic” — at least from a Jewish standpoint — themes in the Lord’s Supper to ideas inherent in the notion of covenant, of the sacrifices connected with it and, in particular, to the peace-offerings as “covenant-offerings.”⁵⁴ Accordingly, the Pauline “Lord’s Supper” is directly related to Jewish covenantal meals, such as those described in the Bible, Philo, Joseph and Asenath, and the intertestamental, rabbinic and Qumran literature.⁵⁵

To understand this, we must first understand that peace is a central theme in Pauline soteriology, with the corollary theme of reconciliation, i.e., unity with God and with one another; for it is in discussing this broader subject that Paul mentions the Lord’s Supper at all.⁵⁶ He writes to a Corinthian church, divided into many factions and beset by numerous sins, some of them very serious moral failures (1 Cor. 5:1–5). They were certainly in need of repentance and reconciliation with God and one another; for their extreme disunity and insensitivity to one another led Paul to declare (ibid., 11:20): “When you come together, it is not the Lord’s Supper you eat.” Clearly, he thought of the meal as in some way an expression of the group’s fellowship together with the Lord, to such a degree that their disunity invalidated the purpose of their sharing the meal.

This is exactly the role of the peace-offering in the Bible (see above) and in extra-biblical literature. Philo’s commentary on the ratification of the covenant in Exodus 24 indicates that Hellenistic Jewish circles interpreted it similarly. On Exodus 24:8a, he asks:

Why did he [Moses] take the blood which was in the bowls and sprinkle [it] over the people? By indicating that the blood of all [was] the same

53. There is a possible wordplay here, with Simeon declaring: “...let Your servant depart in *peace*.... For my eyes have seen Your *salvation*....” Cf. note 35 of this paper for these two uses of σωτηρία.

54. Cf. note 18 above. If this is true, then it is incorrect to view the Pauline model for the Lord’s Supper as Passover, as many commentators have done. Passover is a model for redemption, but the covenant was not inaugurated until three months later at Mount Sinai (cf. Ex. 20:24 and 24:5). The complex question of why and how the Synoptic tradition associates the Last Supper with Passover is much debated and cannot be dealt with here.

55. These are identified with the Essenes, as described in Josephus and Philo.

56. Cf. Davies, p. 253: “In the immediate context of the Pauline account of the Last Supper, it is the need of a proper awareness of the New Community to which Christ had given birth that makes it necessary for Paul to discuss the Supper at all.”

and that their kinship [was] the same.... Even if they are separated from one another by their bodies, they are nevertheless united by mind and thought, and they share together the divine sacrifice and victim, being brought from estrangement to community⁵⁷ and to the concord of distinguished blood.⁵⁸

His comments upon Exodus 24:11a show parallels to the Pauline doctrine of the body (1 Cor. 12:12–27), particularly as expounded in Ephesians 4:16.⁵⁹

Why does [Scripture] say: “Of the chosen seeing ones [a term for Israel] there differed not even one”? ...It is well said that “no one differed,” [meaning] that as in an all-musical chorus with the blended voices of all, one should play music in harmonious measures of modulation and with skilled fingers, seeking to show [this harmony] not so much in sound as in mind.⁶⁰

A Jewish commentator⁶¹ has interpreted the peace-offerings as a covenant of friendship (Gen. 34:21), which expresses both community between God and His own and community of God’s own among themselves. This same idea of joyful table fellowship is expressed in the midrashim about the peace-offerings,⁶² and emphasized particularly by the statement of Rabbi Phineas (see above) that all sacrifices will be abolished in the Age to Come except the thank-offering, which is, as we have seen, closely related to the peace-offering. As an expression of community it was thought to be of such importance that it will not cease, even when the need for the other sacrifices will have ceased.

Another Hellenistic source, Joseph and Asenath, also expressed the close tie between the theme of eating and drinking and that of membership in the covenantal community.⁶³ This story, it is generally held, is an “Egyptian-Jewish legend...describing how Joseph meets Asenath and her conversion from paganism to Judaism before their marriage.” Kuhn points out that in five instances in the text,⁶⁴ “the distinctive mark of the pious Jew is that ‘he eats the blessed bread of life and drinks the blessed cup of immortality.’”⁶⁵ He maintains that this is a “technical formula,” which “is not a natural outgrowth of the events described in the story, but an independent and established ritual for-

57. Cf. Eph. 2:19.

58. *Exodus*, Book 2, 35.

59. “From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.”

60. *Exodus*, Book 2, 30.

61. Grossman, p. 567.

62. “There is a banquet prepared for the righteous in Paradise.” Cf. notes 22 and 26.

63. For a discussion of the origin and dating of Joseph and Asenath, see Karl Georg Kuhn, “The Lord’s Supper and the Communal Meal at Qumran,” Krister Stendahl ed., *The Scrolls and the New Testament* (New York, 1957), pp. 74–75. For further discussion of the text, see E.P. Sanders, “The Covenant as a Soteriological Category and the Nature of Salvation in Palestinian and Hellenistic Judaism,” in *Jews, Greeks and Christians*, pp. 22–25. David Flusser has contributed “Joseph and Asenath: A Hellenistic Jewish Novel” (Hebrew), *Dapim: Studies in Literature* 2 (1985), 73–81.

64. 8:5, 8:9, 15:5, 16:6, 19:5.

65. Kuhn, p. 75.

mula for a cult meal in which the 'pious' and 'God-fearing' Jew participates."⁶⁶ Sanders describes the meal as sacramental,⁶⁷ noting that Asenath is promised that as soon as she partakes "of the bread of life and drinks of her cup of blessing she will be created anew" (15:5). Thus, this is synonymous with her entering into the covenant.

Scholars have theorized as to the provenance of this document. Kuhn believes that the parallels with the cult meal of the Essenes are more significant than those with Christianity. Yet he does not identify the community as Essene, but rather as the "Therapeutae," an Egyptian offshoot of the Palestinian Order of the Essenes described in Philo's *On the Contemplative Life* (8).⁶⁸

The parallels between the cult meal of the Therapeutae and that of the Essenes are striking, as are those between the Essene cult meal and the Pauline Lord's Supper. Both are conceived of in terms of covenant, because both communities viewed themselves as the fulfillment of the new covenant prophesied in Jeremiah 31.⁶⁹

Sanders's thorough treatment of the concept of covenant in the Qumran sect⁷⁰ offers convincing proof of the centrality of this theme in the community's life and thought. However, we must note a distinction between the sect's understanding of the new covenant and that of Christianity; one understands it as a return to the true faith of Israel, involving a meticulous keeping of the Law, while the other understands it in terms of "fulfillment," involving the abrogation, according to Sanders, of the Law as a way of salvation.

The principal references to the cult meal of the community are found in Philo (*Judaeus* 2:319), Josephus (*War* 2,8,5), the Manual of Discipline (1QS 6:1-6) and the Annex to the Manual of Discipline (1QSa 2:17-22). These sources all agree that the community practiced daily ritual immersion baths, possibly related to the cult meal, and ate together in a daily communal meal. We may infer from Josephus' account that it was in some way sacramental in nature: "After the purification, they assemble in a special room which none of the uninitiated is permitted to enter; pure now themselves [i.e., after the ritual bath], they repair to the refectory, as to some *sacred shrine*."⁷¹ Josephus thus ties the ritual of purification to the eating of the meal. Note that in the Temple cult, the priests were required to undergo ritual immersion before and after each cult action.⁷² Even, though the sect had separated itself from the Temple

66. *Ibid.*, p. 75.

67. Sanders, "The Covenant."

68. Kuhn, p. 76.

69. Cf. CD 6:16, 8:21 and 20:21; Man B 1:34; 1QHab 2:3 f.

70. Sanders, *Paul*, pp. 240-257.

71. The Manual of Discipline adds that there must be ten men — the quorum required for a Jewish service — participating, with a priest presiding over each group of ten.

72. Cf. Kuhn, p. 68. They also emphasized purification, or holiness, on the part of those participating in the peace-offering, as Grossman notes: "The meal being holy, the guests were, of course, required to make themselves holy by cleansing themselves, for impurity excluded them from participating" (p. 567). Cf. Lev. 7:16-18 and 19:5-8; 1 Sam. 20-26. So also the *Didache* (10:6) teaches that the participant in the Eucharist must be holy: "If anyone is holy, let him come. If not, let him repent."

cult, its members “continued to live in accordance with priestly purity,”⁷³ which also underlines the sacramental significance of the meal for the Qumran sect.

According to the Manual of Discipline, the priest blesses the “first portion of the bread and wine” (1QS 6:6), while the annex to the Manual of Discipline adds:

No one is to touch the first portion of the bread and wine before the priest. For it is he who blesses the first portion of the bread and of the wine and who touches as the first the bread. (1QSa 2:18–19)

The terminology reflects the sacrificial terminology of the Temple cult, which we find in Leviticus 7:28–36 in connection with the peace-offerings.

Moreover, the order of the priestly blessings is significant. Flusser⁷⁴ has demonstrated the existence of two traditions of the Last Supper, distinguished by the order of the blessings over the bread and wine. One tradition, evidenced in the original Lukan text of the Last Supper, follows the more familiar Jewish pattern of the wine first and then the bread.⁷⁵ Paul, however, as well as Matthew and Mark, reflects a different tradition, one in which the bread is blessed first and then the wine. Flusser concludes that the Pauline tradition practiced in Hellenistic churches comes from an Essene model:

Both the form and meaning of the Holy Communion in Hellenistic churches in Paul’s time are known. These churches underwent an important influence of Essenism.... From 1 Cor. 11:23–26 we see that already Paul found in these churches both the Essene order (bread, wine) and the form of Jesus’ words at the Last Supper....⁷⁶

Flusser has also noted the significant link between the cult meal and the theme of covenant in the Essene community. Comparing their meal with that of Christianity, he writes: “...an Essene *theologoumenon* was then fruitfully linked with the concept of Christ’s expiatory death, namely, the idea of a special covenant with the community, or, in other words, the concept of the new covenant.”⁷⁷ Kuhn summarizes the similarities between the Christian and Essene cult meals; they both were 1) celebrated daily, 2) celebrated communally, and 3) of a cultic nature.⁷⁸

Thus, there are significant parallels between the Essene cult meal and that of the early Christian covenantal community. But there are also differences. First and foremost, the meal is called the “Lord’s Supper” (1 Cor. 11:20). We do not know exactly what this signifies; most likely it refers to the Lord’s role, i.e., as host. Although the notion that Jesus is equal to the “Lord” (Ἦ, κύριος) of

73. Kuhn, *ibid.*

74. David Flusser, “The Last Supper and the Essenes,” *Immanuel* 2 (Spring 1973), 23–27.

75. Clearly, Lk. 22:20 in most MSS includes an interpolation that seeks to harmonize the original text (as found in MS D, etc.) with that of 1 Cor. 11.

76. Flusser, p. 25. If Kuhn is right that there is evidence of a “technical formula” in the bread and wine of Joseph and Asenath, this is further evidence of sectarian — and Hellenistic Jewish at that — practice of this order.

77. *Ibid.*

78. Kuhn, p. 72.

the Bible is foreign to Jewish thought, we need not understand it as an entirely Hellenistic innovation based upon the mystery religions;⁷⁹ it derives from antecedents in Jewish literature and thought. For example, we met above the idea that God hosts the fellowship meal that was part of the peace-offering. Moreover, in the Qumran literature, the priestly and kingly Messiahs preside over the eschatological meal (1QSa 2:11–21); and there are similar traditions in rabbinic literature, e.g., Exodus Rabbah 25:7 states that the Messiah “will establish peace for them [variant reading: he will set a table for them] and they will sit at ease and eat in Paradise.”

Paul, however, viewed Jesus not only as the host at the fellowship meal, but also as the sacrifice itself.⁸⁰ Yet even in this respect, the Pauline account of the Lord’s Supper is slightly less offensive to Jewish sensibilities than that of Matthew and Mark; they have Jesus identify the cup directly as “my blood” (Mt. 26:28, Mk. 14:24), whereas Paul quotes Jesus as stating only that it is “the cup of the new covenant in my blood” (1 Cor. 11:25). The cup is identified with the new covenant, which was inaugurated by the death (blood) and resurrection of Jesus.⁸¹ This significant departure from Matthew and Mark’s formula for the meal⁸² is noted by Davies:

If our approach to the Pauline account of the Last Supper is correct, we should expect the idea of community to play a greater part in this thought of the Supper than that of the expiation of sins.... For Paul, the death of Jesus when he thinks of the Eucharist, is primarily the means whereby the New Community is constituted.⁸³

The function or significance of the meal is to remember Jesus through the eating of the bread and the drinking of the cup and to proclaim the Lord’s death “until he comes” (v. 26), another feature which has been associated with Hellenistic mystery religions.⁸⁴ Yet the idea of “memorial” or “remembrance” is very prominent in Judaism, particularly in connection with remembering God’s saving acts or His covenant. In fact, the word ἀνάμνησις (“remembrance”) has led many commentators to see the Lord’s Supper as rooted in the Passover celebration, on the basis of parallels in the Passover liturgy.

79. An important difference is pointed out by Lease, p. 1319: “In Mithraism, Mithra is divine, but he is a nature divinity; he is a heroic figure of salvation, but while he is both a hero and a god, Christ becomes both a god and human.”

80. “He is our peace,” see the discussion of Eph. 2:11 above.

81. We can easily understand how wine came to be associated with blood, for we find an example of this usage also in Sirach 50:15: at the dedication of the Temple, Simon the High Priest “reached out his hand to the cup and poured out a libation of the blood of the grape, poured it out at the foot of the altar, a pleasing odor to the Most High, the King of all.” Note that this, too, is in the context of the sacrifice of a thank-offering.

82. Actually, since the Matthean and Markan accounts are the later ones, it is they who depart from the Pauline formula.

83. Davies, p. 252.

84. Lease, p. 1325: “Both religions expected a salvation of body and soul through a supper commemorating their lord, but each had a quite different conception of the role of their god in the achievement of that salvation and the function of the meal in representing that final reward.”

We find the notion of remembrance in many biblical passages, three of which have to do with the peace-offerings:

Moses set up twelve stone pillars representing the twelve tribes of Israel.⁸⁵ (Ex. 24:4)

When you have crossed the Jordan into the land the Lord your God is giving you, set up some large stones and coat them with plaster. Write on them all the words of the Law.... (Deut. 27:2-3)

At your times of rejoicing...you are to sound the trumpets over your burnt offerings and peace-offerings, and they will be a memorial for you before your God. (Num. 10:10)

The idea is strongly implied in a fourth passage:

Jacob took a stone and set it up as a pillar...Laban said, "This heap is a witness between you and me today." ...So Jacob took an oath in the name of the fear of his father Isaac. He offered a sacrifice there in the hill country and invited his relatives to a meal.... (Gen. 31:45-55)

The concept of the "Lord's Supper" as a memorial of the Lord's death expresses the covenantal nature of the meal for the participants. It recalls the new covenant that God inaugurated through the salvific work of Jesus. Like the covenantal meals of Qumran, which expressed the community's covenant with God and with each other, the meal was a daily ritual. Many scholars have noted that the Pauline account specifies repetition of the ritual, which is absent from the Synoptic Gospels,⁸⁶ this is evidence that the Pauline Lord's Supper was a covenantal meal modelled after Jewish covenantal meals rather than Passover.⁸⁷

Paul further indicates that he viewed the Lord's Supper in terms of the peace-offering in his subsequent commentary on the bread and wine, where he clearly associates them with the thank-offering:⁸⁸

Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the Blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one loaf, we who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf. (1 Cor. 10:16-17)

He designates the cup as "the cup of thanksgiving," a reference to "the cup of salvation" (Ps. 116:13), lifted up in the sacrifice of the thank-offering (Ps. 116:17). In this regard we may note that one of the earliest names for the "Lord's Supper" is the "Eucharist," a direct transliteration from the Greek *εὐχαριστία* ("thanksgiving"), thus reflecting the terminology of the thank-offering.

Again, the covenantal imagery is central in this passage. We have seen that Paul's phrase "Body of Christ" represents his concept of the community of the new covenant under the leadership of the Messiah. For Paul, in Schweitzer's

85. Philo calls this a "suitable memorial" in *Exodus*, Book 2, 30.

86. So Albert Schweitzer, *The Problem of the Lord's Supper* (Macon, Georgia, 1982), p. 60.

87. So Kuhn, p. 81: "It is worthy of notice that the formula does not presuppose a special Passover, but the Jewish meal in general." Cf. Flusser, p. 25.

88. Cf. note 20.

words, “the partaking of the bread and cup bring the participant into fellowship with Christ’s body and blood; future union envisioned had become for Paul a present union.”⁸⁹

Many commentators have pointed out the multi-faceted aspect of the Lord’s Supper according to various Christian traditions — as a sacrifice that the Christian offers to the Lord, a remembrance and a celebration of the new covenant inaugurated by Jesus, or a celebration of the kingdom. These various traditions were present already in the Early Church⁹⁰ and remain to this day. For example, the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches, in its statement on baptism, Eucharist and ministry,⁹¹ has described the Eucharist in terms of its several aspects, three of which are: 1) Thanksgiving to the Father, 2) the Communion of the Faithful, 3) the Meal of the Kingdom. If we view the meal in terms of its antecedents, i.e., the peace-offerings, the difficulty of the various aspects is eliminated, for as we have seen, the peace-offerings were also multi-faceted.

Conclusion

I have demonstrated that the peace-offerings were understood, in both the Hebrew Bible and the extra-biblical literature, as a) an expression of the special covenantal relationship between the Jewish people and their God, and b) an expression of the unity that the people experienced through corporate membership in the covenantal community, primarily because the peace-offerings were rooted in the Hebrew concepts of שלום (“peace”) and השלמה (“reconciliation”). When the people declared that they would keep all the words of the law, thus accepting God’s terms for entering into covenantal relationship with Him, they became the recipients of all the benefits of that relationship — forgiveness of sins, prosperity, health, well-being, protection, guidance, and (in later literature) deliverance from God’s judgment upon the wicked, and eternal life.

The concept of “peace” gained prominence in the late biblical and Second Temple literature, becoming a synonym for “salvation.” The close relationship between the two terms is reflected in the Septuagint’s translation of שלמים (“peace-offerings”) as σωτηρία, which also indicates a development toward viewing the peace-offerings as a sacrifice that brings salvation.

Paul used the terms “peace” and “reconciliation” (among other terms) to express soteriological concepts not primarily eschatological, whereas σώζω and its derivatives almost always are eschatological. He described Jesus as “our peace” (Eph. 2:14) through whom God reconciled the world to himself (2 Cor. 5:19). A corollary to his effecting peace between God and humanity is his creation of unity among those who believe in him, even to the point of bringing together Jew and gentile (Eph. 2:17–19). Consequently, the two aspects of

89. Schweitzer, *Problem*, p. 32.

90. Cf. Didache 9:1–10:6; Schweitzer, *Problem*; Kuhn, pp. 87–88; Oscar Cullman, *Early Christian Worship* (London, 1962), pp. 10–15.

91. *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (Faith and Order Paper No. 111; Geneva, 1982), p. 10.

“peace” expressed by the peace-offerings are brought together in Pauline thought.

The key concept in Paul’s thought which leads him to see Jesus in terms of the peace-offerings is his belief that Jesus was the initiator of the new covenant (Jer. 31:31–34). Just as the peace-offerings were sacrificed at the ratification or renewal of the “old covenant,” being an expression of it, so also Jesus inaugurated a “new covenant” in his blood (1 Cor. 11:25).

In Paul, therefore, the Lord’s Supper is not modelled after the Passover, as is commonly held, but after the peace-offerings. It would seem that in this, he follows the lead of other Jewish sectarian groups who had separated themselves from the Temple cult and in whose thought and practice the covenantal meal had taken on special — even sacramental — significance. He was especially influenced by the Essene sect, with their emphasis upon covenant (“new covenant”) and the order of the liturgy at the meal, which differs from more familiar Jewish practice.

While much of Pauline theology may be traced to Jewish antecedents, Paul probably did borrow some terminology from non-Jewish Hellenistic sources. As he presented the Gospel to both Jew and gentile in the Diaspora, the message took on the form — the religious language of the Hellenistic world — that his hearers could understand and to which they could relate. Yet this language served, with a few exceptions, only as a vehicle for communicating basically Jewish ideas. The content of Pauline soteriology differs considerably from that of Gnosticism or the mystery religions: it is rooted firmly in the Jewish concepts of covenant and peace, as also in the concept that brings them together — the peace-offerings.

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