

Article

Prefigurative Peace in Philippians

Peter-Ben Smit ^{1,2,3}

¹ Faculty of Religion and Theology, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, 1081 Amsterdam, The Netherlands; p.b.a.smit@vu.nl

² Faculty of Humanities, Utrecht University, 3512 JP Utrecht, The Netherlands

³ Faculty of Theology, University of Pretoria, Pretoria 0028, South Africa

Abstract: Paul refers to peace twice in Phil. 4:7 and 4:9. This paper argues that the peace of God is a prefiguration of the eschatological peace to come in God's world. It is proposed that as Philippians is dealing with a social order (i.e., that of life in Christ) that is distinct from the dominant social order of the Roman empire or that of the colony of Philippi, political implications are at the very least a corollary of what Paul is writing to the Christ devotees in this city. The main points that will be argued are that peace is best understood as a key dimension for God's upcoming new world that is already present "in Christ". The Philippian community is called upon to stand firm in Christ (Phil. 4:1), which is, due to devotional and ethical practices, to result in the experience of God's peace or the God of peace. This must be understood as both a present and a future reality. Accordingly, the Philippian community can be seen as prefiguring God's future world by inhabiting this world now already in their communal life.

Keywords: peace; Philippians; Paul; New Testament; prefiguration; early Christianity

1. Introduction

In Phil. 4:7 and 4:9, Paul refers to peace twice,¹ once to the "peace of God" (v. 7) and once to "the God of peace" (v. 9). At the same time, the text has a distinctly eschatological feel, as it is apparent in v. 5 with its reference to the Lord's being near; also, the notion of being preserved or protected in Christ Jesus (v. 7) may point to an eschatological orientation. This paper will proceed to take this eschatological dimension of the text as a starting point for also interpreting the peace of God as something eschatological that is, at the same time, already present and can be experienced in the ἐκκλησία. This experience amounts to a prefiguration of the peace that is to come when the Lord, who is near, will indeed come (on the "day of Christ", cf. Phil. 2:16).² The attitudes that Paul calls for in this passage, then, such as being gentle (v. 5), or prayerful (v. 6), and the list of laudable forms of behavior mentioned in v. 8, can, in a next step, also be interpreted as anticipations of God's peaceful world. In this way, the moral meets the eschatological, as the various forms of virtuous behavior that Paul mentions remain, on the one hand, precisely that: morally recommendable attitudes; yet, they also become, on the other hand, anticipatory performances of God's future. In fact, this paper will argue that it is precisely the eschatological expectation that was, presumably, shared by Paul and the Philippians which created the space required for persisting in such behavior and for remaining faithful to Christ by such persistence. The paper will make use of theoretical insights about this kind of prefiguration, i.e., of the ἐκκλησία prefiguring God's new world, derived from philosophical reflection on this mode of thinking, which can, even though developed in the course of the 19th and 20th centuries,³ nonetheless help to elucidate the *modus vivendi* of Paul and the Philippians.⁴

In what follows, first general observations about peace in Philippians and the Pauline correspondence will be offered. These are followed by a consideration of the relationship between peace and the presence of God in the same sources, as well as of the coincidence



Citation: Smit, Peter-Ben. 2024. Prefigurative Peace in Philippians. *Religions* 15: 944. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel15080944>

Academic Editors: Isaac Blois and Gregory Lamb

Received: 19 March 2024

Revised: 29 June 2024

Accepted: 30 June 2024

Published: 5 August 2024



Copyright: © 2024 by the author. Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

of the presence and the absence of peace. In a next step, this is further developed with the help of insights from the aforementioned discourse on prefigurative politics, which feeds into a consideration of peace, as it occurs in Phil. 4:7.9, in the social and political context of the Roman world.

2. Peace in Its Literary Context

Apart from its occurrence in the letter's salutation (1:2: *χάρις ὑμῖν καὶ εἰρήνη*), peace occurs prominently in Paul's Letter to the Philippians in chapter 4. In a section demarcated from the preceding exhortations directed at individuals (Euodia, Syntyche, an unknown 'yoke fellow', and Clemens), by the emphatic and more general call to 'rejoice' in v. 4 (*χαίρετε ἐν κυρίῳ πάντοτε· πάλιν ἔρω, χαίρετε*)⁵ and a shift of topic between vv. 9 (on the God of peace) and 10 (on the concern the Philippians have shown for Paul), accompanied by a shift to the first person singular from more general statements in the preceding verses, two references to peace occur, first to the 'peace of God' (*ἡ εἰρήνη τοῦ θεοῦ*) in v. 7 and subsequently to the 'God of peace' (*ὁ θεὸς τῆς εἰρήνης*) in v. 9.

In fact, each statement concludes a segment of the general paraenesis that Paul issues in Phil. 4:4b–9, as *τὸ λοιπόν* in v. 8 clearly subdivides this section of the letter,⁶ even if there is thematic continuity, which, in turn, continues the concerns of Phil. 4:1–4a on a more general plane by now not addressing individual members of the community by name but focusing on the behavior of the community at large. In fact, both the admonitions in 4:2–4a and the general exhortations in 4:4b–9 can be seen as being governed by Paul's call in 4:1 *στῆκετε ἐν κυρίῳ*.⁷

Both the rejoicing and thanksgiving, the focus of vv. 4b–6, issues into a statement on peace and, therefore, as does the exhortation to display all kinds of virtuous behavior that runs from v. 8 to the beginning of v. 9. In the first case, divine peace is said to guard the heads and minds of the Philippians in Christ Jesus (*φρουρήσει τὰς καρδίας ὑμῶν καὶ τὰ νοήματα ὑμῶν ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ*)—the use of the military expression *φρουρήσει* is striking and will require more attention—in the second case, the statement is that the God of peace will be with the Philippians (*ὁ θεὸς τῆς εἰρήνης ἔσται μεθ' ὑμῶν*).

In both cases, the connection between the exhortation and the remarks about peace is made through the conjunctive copula *καί*, which seems innocuous but does raise questions, as one could wonder whether the (desired) behavior of the Philippians can, as it were, produce God's peace or compel it to be amongst them; alternatively, it can be taken as an indication that v. 9 goes beyond v. 7 by stating that not (merely) God's peace will be there but that the God of peace will himself be present. This will be returned to below. For now, it has been established that divine peace, resp. the God of peace, plays a central role in the clearly demarcated section Phil. 4:4b–9 and is closely connected to the behavior of the Philippians as a community.

3. Peace and God's Presence

A next question to ask is what the role of the divine peace and the God of peace is precisely in these verses. When surveying commentaries, there is considerable anxiety resulting, in fact, from the conjunctive copula *καί*, as it is argued that the peace or the presence of the God of peace resulting from the Philippians' behavior ought not to be understood along the lines of the result of God's reconciliation with God's people that also results in peace (as in Rom. 5:1). Such anxiety, resulting from the reception of Paul in the confessional traditions of Christendom (and of which I am part as well), is always a good reason for taking a second look. A starting point for such a second look can be a survey of the use of the noun *εἰρήνη* in Paul's (undisputed) letters. When inventorying this use, the following picture emerges (leaving out Phil. 4:7.9).

First, Paul uses the term *εἰρήνη* in his salutations, such as in Rom 1:7, 1 Cor. 1:3, 2 Cor. 1:2, Gal. 1:3, Phil. 1:2, 1 Thess. 1:1 and Phlm. 1:3 (see also a wish such as Rom. 15:13 or 15:33, or also 1 Cor. 16:11, 2 Cor. 13:11, Gal. 6:16), where it is typically coupled with *χάρις*. This use is both relatively generic, as it uses a greeting common among Jews, such as

Paul, in letters, and is specific, as it adjusts the common Greek *χαίρε* or (more commonly) *χαίρειν* to *χάρις*,⁸ thereby giving it a particular theological twist, especially as usually a specification is also added, such as in Phil. 1:1 *χάρις μὴν καὶ εἰρήνη ἀπὸ θεοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ*, of which especially the final part is of significance, as it is so specific (the expression *ἀπὸ θεοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν*—“from God our father”—could, in theory, refer to any number of deities). Paul does not elaborate on the meaning of peace in his salutations; yet, given the general use of *εἰρήνη* (and its Hebrew and Aramaic equivalents), it can be assumed to refer to a situation of well-being that goes beyond the absence of war and life but consists of the good life (with the note that the source of this is Jesus Christ).⁹ If this interpretation of Paul’s salutations is right, then the use of *εἰρήνη* here agrees with that found in, for instance, Rom. 2:10, where ‘honor and peace (*τιμὴ καὶ εἰρήνη*) is the outcome of God’s judgment for the righteous. Again, peace can be taken here to refer to something like the good life; it goes beyond the absence of strife. Something similar occurs in Rom. 3:17, where reference is made to those who do not know the way of peace (*ὁδὸν εἰρήνης οὐκ ἔγνωσαν*), which is here both a walk of life in agreement with and leading to the good life, which is characteristic of the just. The reference to peace in Rom. 8:6 can be seen to concur with this, as here also a quality of, in this case, the mind, is indicated by means of a reference *τὸ δὲ φρόνημα τοῦ πνεύματος ζωῆ καὶ εἰρήνη*. This also goes for Rom. 14:17, where the quality of God’s kingdom is described as consisting of *δικαιοσύνη καὶ εἰρήνη καὶ χαρὰ*, Rom. 14:19, which agrees with the aforementioned use of the term (see also, albeit less forcefully 1 Cor. 7:15, compare 1 Cor. 14:33). The expression *ὁ δὲ θεὸς τῆς εἰρήνης* (Phil. 4:9) agrees with this when it occurs in Rom. 16:20 (cf. also 1 Thess. 5:23), God is the one representing peace and accordingly stamping out evil (in this verse: Satan). Along similar lines, peace is mentioned among the fruits of the Spirit in Gal. 5:22.

A second, distinct but related, use of the term *εἰρήνη* appears in 1 Thess. 5:3, where a(n imperial) slogan is quoted that refers to *εἰρήνη καὶ ἀσφάλεια*, which Paul problematizes subsequently.¹⁰

A third kind of use of *εἰρήνη* can be found in statements about reconciliation, for instance in Rom. 5:1, where a statement like *εἰρήνην ἔχομεν πρὸς τὸν θεόν* refers more to a situation of conflict that has been ended and a relationship that has been restored than to ‘the good life.’ This is also suggested by the language of enmity and conflict resolution in Rom. 5:10: *... γὰρ ἔχθροὶ ὄντες κατηλλάγημεν τῷ θεῷ διὰ τοῦ θανάτου τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ...*¹¹

This survey shows two things. First, two or three distinct uses of the term *εἰρήνη* can be found in Paul’s letters, of which the first is much more prevalent than the second two. Even when breaking down the first or first two categories down further, e.g., by distinguishing between statements about peace and formula’s wishing it on others, the distinction in terms of content remains, with one emphasizing a general state of well-being, which seems to both social and spiritual in nature (and thereby goes beyond being at peace psychologically), and another the resolution of a conflict through forms of mediation and peace brokering.

4. Peace: Both Present and Absent

One dimension of Paul’s remarks about peace is that it appears to be both a present reality and an absent or future one.¹² On the side of the present there is, for instance, Paul’s notion that there is now peace between God and humankind (Rom. 5:1) but also the idea that peace belongs to the fruits of the Spirit and (Gal. 5:22) refers to the present experience of the *ἐκκλησία*, while also 1 Cor. 7:15 mentions peace as something that ought to govern the community now, which also goes for 1 Cor. 14:33. The various wishes for peace, as they have been listed above, point to peace as something that the congregation is hoped to experience, clearly in the present, but as wishes point to a future reality, they are more than a statement about the current state of affairs. This also applies to the two references to peace in Phil. 4:7,9, given that here a particular kind of behavior is to lead to the presence of peace or (even) the God of peace,¹³ *καί* in both v. 7 and v. 9 should, therefore, be understood

in a consecutive way,¹⁴ which suits the future tense that is used, expressive as it is of a certain development.¹⁵ Clearly eschatological is the reference to peace in Rom. 2:10, while a statement about peace as one of the qualities of the kingdom of God, such as in Rom. 14:17, is somewhere in between, referring both to the state of affairs in God's future reign as well as to the situation as it ought to be in the church.¹⁶

For the interpretation of the statements on peace in Phil. 4:7,9, this relation of peace to both the present and the future is of relevance. To begin with, the idea that certain practices of the Philippians will lead to Christ's peace encompassing them and the presence of the God of peace with them shows that (the God of) peace is both an absent reality as one that can be expected to be experienced in this world (as distinguished from the world to come). Beyond this, one can argue that this peace is also related to something that is in the past and that determines the future, i.e., the reconciliation through Christ that leads to peace between God and humankind, if Paul subscribes to this idea expressed in Rom. 5:1 already in his letter to the Philippians.¹⁷ In addition, one can argue that peace also has an eschatological dimension and that it will determine the world to come, governed by the God of peace (e.g., Rom. 2:10, 14:17).

A weakness of this approach is that it uses rather a lot of (possibly later) Pauline epistles to interpret Paul's remarks in Phil. 4:7,9. However, the idea that something that is experienced now already is at the same time a foreshadowing of the fullness of God's new world and also occurs in Phil. itself. This applies to both positive and negative experiences of this ἐκκλησία. A positive example is when Paul describes the (desired) behavior of the Philippians, the quality of which he seems to remember from his time among them in 2:14–18; whatever causes the Philippians to shine like stars in the world now (2:15) can be regarded as announcing their eschatological salvation (2:16). Interesting enough, Paul is even more keen to interpret negative experiences in the present as pointing towards future salvation. This is the case, for instance, in ch. 3, where he views both his own suffering (and rejection or loss of social status) as a form of identification with Christ (as described in the "hymn" in 2:5–11) and the difficult situation of the Philippian ἐκκλησία as well; both are not so much harbingers of further future humiliation but rather foreshadow future glorification. With regard to himself, Paul writes about knowing the power of Christ's resurrection and identifying with his suffering, in the hope of once participating in the resurrection as well (τοῦ γινῶναι αὐτὸν καὶ τὴν δύναμιν τῆς ἀναστάσεως αὐτοῦ καὶ τὴν κοινωνίαν τῶν παθημάτων αὐτοῦ, συμμορφιζόμενος τῷ θανάτῳ αὐτοῦ, εἰ πως καταντήσω εἰς τὴν ἐξανάστασιν τὴν ἐκ νεκρῶν). With regard to the Philippians, he announces that the Lord will transform the humiliated bodies of the Philippians to those akin to his body of glory (μετασχηματίσει τὸ σῶμα τῆς ταπεινώσεως ἡμῶν σύμμορφον τῷ σώματι τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ).

Paul's remarks of peace can be understood in a similar manner: they lead to an experience of God's peace or the presence of the God of peace in the here and now that, at the same time, points to the fullness of peace in God's future. This way of thinking about Paul's remarks about peace in Phil. 4:7,9 also has another advantage, i.e., the notion that the Philippians somehow "earn" God's peace (or the presence of God), which would sit strangely in the context of Paul's general emphasis on *not* earning anything from God, can be sidelined. This is to say that the behavior that the Philippians ought to display according to Paul (4:5b–6; 4:8) does not so much earn them anything but rather aligns them with God's (eschatological) reality of peace, which then can be experienced in their midst and as determining their outlook on life.¹⁸ Their life of rejoicing in Christ and of thanksgiving prayer as well as of living a virtuous life (after the example of Paul)¹⁹ resonates in such a way with God's peace that it can be said that this is present among the Philippians. Their lives in Christ are lives that go beyond behavior that is morally appropriate but are lived as if they have already arrived in God's world fully, of which the experience of the quality of this world, i.e., its peace, is a consequence.

These observations give rise to another consideration that has to do with the difference in formulations between Phil. 4:7 and 4:9, i.e., between εἰρήνη τοῦ θεοῦ and ὁ θεὸς τῆς

εἰρήνης that is often commented upon, especially in terms of an increase in intensity: first “merely” God’s peace is the prospect that Paul offers, which is then surpassed by an outlook on God’s own presence. This (supposed) increase is odd, given that it is hard to see why Paul would feel the need to make this distinction within the scope of only a few verses, in which twice a rather similar line of thought is espoused. If, however, the devotion and virtue in the life of the Philippian community are of a quality that can be said to be a form of the presence of God’s peace, then one can also wonder whether this peace does not communicate the presence of God in the community. Imagining God’s personal presence would go beyond Paul’s awareness of God’s otherness, yet viewing the *praxis pietatis* of the Philippian community as something through which God’s peace becomes present and the idea that this peace communicates God’s presence at the same time, given that God is the God of peace, circumvents this problem and also makes it possible to view the statements in Phil. 4:7 and 4:9 as referring to the same reality in two different ways, rather than seeing them as referring, somewhat oddly, to a lesser and superior effect of the *praxis* of the Philippians. At most, Phil. 4:9 goes beyond 4:7 by unpacking that the experience of God’s peace amounts to experiencing God’s presence, which is mediated through this experience of peace,²⁰ but it does not seem to be the case that in v. 9 something is announced that is qualitatively different from what was said in v. 7.

5. Peace and Prefiguration

Having argued for an understanding of the experience of God’s peace as a mode of the presence of the God of peace mediated by the *praxis* of the Philippian community,²¹ this can be contextualized further in two ways. First, it can be contextualized by tying it to Paul’s overarching concern in his Letter to the Philippians, i.e., encouraging to the Philippians to allow themselves to be drawn into a further life in Christ. Second, it can be placed in a broader eschatological context, which, as such, is also an important dimension of the epistle; it is here that an argument can be made that the peace in Phil. 4:7.9 has a prefigurative dimension.

First, the idea that the Philippians are to show a particular kind of behavior does not occur for the first time in the letter in its ch. 4. In fact, Paul’s exhortations begin much earlier and these earlier instances of paraenesis provide an important context for what he says in Phil. 4. In particular, at the end of Phil. 1, in vv. 27–30, and the beginning of Phil. 2, in vv. 1–4, and subsequently following the “Christ hymn” in Phil. 2:5–11 (in vv. 12–28), Paul exhorts the Philippians to behave in a particular manner, following his own example (cf. 1:30 τὸν αὐτὸν ἀγῶνα ἔχοντες ὡς εἶδετε ἐν ἐμοὶ καὶ νῦν ἀκούετε ἐν ἐμοί), especially by having the attitude that is also there in Christ (2:5 τοῦτο φρονεῖτε ἐν ὑμῖν ὡς καὶ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ). As the Philippian Christ devotees are “in Christ” (cf., e.g., the salutation: πᾶσιν τοῖς ἁγίοις ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ), they are also to align themselves with Christ’s attitude, which is described in the hymn as a basis for the Philippians’ walk of life. In turn, such discernment of the right way of life Paul has earlier on indicated as a fruit of righteousness through Jesus Christ (1:11—πεπληρωμένοι καρπὸν δικαιοσύνης τὸν διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ εἰς δόξαν καὶ ἔπαινον θεοῦ, see the emphasis on grown in love and discernment in the preceding verses). The development of a Christ-like *praxis* in the Philippians community can, therefore, be seen as a form of living into the reality in which they have been placed, i.e., that of being in Christ and based on the righteousness received through Christ. These observations are reinforced when noting that the call that governs all of Phil. 4:1–9, i.e., στήκετε ἐν κυρίῳ, results, in fact, from Paul’s eschatological vision of the heavenly citizenship in Phil. 3:20–21; it is by standing firm in Christ and inhabiting, as it were, this citizenship now already that God’s peace can be experienced.²²

Second, the eschatological dimension of peace and, with that, its relationship with the world to come requires attention. At first, there might be little reason to think that the peace in Phil. 4:7.9 has an eschatological dimension at all. One could also imagine, as it has often been done, that it is all about experiencing a kind of divinely imbued mindfulness.²³ However attractive this may be for forms of proclamation in late capitalist

forms of Christianity with its focus on well-being, it misses the linguistic mark, given that it has been shown convincingly that εἰρήνη refers much less to an inner sense of tranquility and much more to a harmonious social order, which, in turn, can of course contribute to mental well-being (a topic that cannot be pursued further here), even to a form of the same that goes widely beyond that what can be achieved by any human νοῦς, although such inner peacefulness is a dimension of an overarching divine order of divine peace, which is, finally, in agreement with God's character as a God of peace.²⁴ This need not surprise, given that this is exactly the referent of the Hebrew עִרְוָה that echoes through Paul's use of εἰρήνη, while it also agrees fully with common Greek uses of the term.²⁵ The gist of that understanding has also been formulated convincingly by Kreinecker, when she argued that εἰρήνη like pax was understood primarily as 'a complex political programme' rather than as a state of mindfulness.²⁶ What the Philippians are to experience is, therefore, not so much a particular mental state as a particular quality of life in communion that is a key aspect of the order of God's world to come, which is both a future and an already present reality. Living into an existence in Christ mediates God's peace, in this sense of the word, to the Philippians already.²⁷ This agrees with the immediate context of the remarks about peace, as they are prefaced by Paul's statement ὁ κύριος ἐγγύς (4:5), which places the entire section in an eschatological context.²⁸ The same is true for the qualification of the peace as (ἡ) ὑπερέχουσα πάντα νοῦν, which also points to a reality that is beyond the present one, in other words: forms of foreshadowing, or prefiguration seem to be occurring.

This dimension of prefiguration can be developed further with reference to the contemporary political philosophical discourse on prefigurative politics, which, although it has roots in the Christian tradition with its own origins in Judaism, often pays little attention to religious discourses, while, vice versa, those studying theological sources do not frequently utilize this discourse in their research either.²⁹

6. Prefigurative Politics: Some Contours

Prefigurative politics, 'an experimental political practice in which the ends of one's actions are mirrored in the means applied in their realisation'³⁰ is a relatively recent model which is used in the analysis of contemporary movements such as 'Occupy' or earlier movements, such as the Paris Commune of 1871 (religious movements are not typically analyzed from this vantage point). Leach describes the functioning of such movement as follows:

Rather than looking to a revolutionary vanguard to seize existing power structures and implement revolutionary change on behalf of the masses or to trade unions or political parties to leverage reforms within the existing system, a prefigurative approach seeks to create the new society "in the shell of the old" by developing counterhegemonic institutions and modes of interaction that embody the desired transformation.³¹

First developed in the 1970s,³² the concept facilitates overcoming dichotomies such as that between means and end (the end is present in the means) and between a future ideal and the present: the future is already there in the present through its prefigurative performance in communal practices.³³ Thus, prefigurative practices manipulate time to the extent that the dichotomy between present and future becomes blurred. However, this is not the only kind of dichotomy that is called into question in prefigurative practices. Beyond the dichotomy between future and present, others include the following:

- The dichotomy between means and end because the end is already present in the means.
- The dichotomy between presence and absence because what is (yet) absent is also (already) there.
- The dichotomy between ideal and reality, as the ideal is present in a reality that does not agree with the ideal; with this, also a strict dichotomy between body and mind becomes blurred as the (noetically) imagined future is imagined through physical practices and experiments.

- The dichotomy between center and margin, as (marginal) prefigurative practices both establish themselves as center and continue as marginal.

Inherent in the analysis of a religious movement,³⁴ such as the early Jesus movement, as a form of social experimentation and in terms of prefigurative politics is, of course, also the collapse of the dichotomy between religion (a problematic term for any first century CE phenomenon to begin with) and politics (this would also invite the analysis of not explicitly religious forms of social experimentation from a theological point of view, of course, as forms of ‘secular liturgy,’ as it were).

As it seems that the blurring or even collapsing of these various dichotomies is what characterizes prefigurative practices, or is at least one of their outstanding characteristics, they will be used in what follows as an organizing principle for the analysis of aspects of peace in the Letter to the Philippians.

7. Peace in Prefigurative Perspective

The first dimension to consider is the relationship between present and future. As it was argued above already, these two overlap in the sense that the peace, in the sense of social order, of God’s future world becomes present in the community in the present. This matters much, as the construction of time is always also deeply political in nature.³⁵ As soon as a community not only orients itself towards an alternative political order, in this case alternative to the order of the Greco-Roman world, including its imperial dimensions, but also crafts its own understanding of time, it positions itself independently. If important dimensions of the calculation (and, with that, construction) of time are geared towards the political structures that dominate this world—and with a calculation of time *ab urbe condita* or in terms of the years of rule of emperors and the like, this was certainly the case—³⁶ and one introduces an understanding of time, in which the present is no longer primarily determined by what one may call imperial time but rather by the future of the God of peace, the inauguration of which is very much connected to the glorification of his son, who was crucified on behalf of the empire, then the prefigurative presence of God’s peace in the Philippian community is deeply political in nature and contributes to shaping its social profile, both in this world while not being of it. This also means that new light can be shed on the Lord’s nearness as it is mentioned in v. 5, from a prefigurative perspective, as both interpretations emphasize its eschatological orientation and exegeses underlining the Lord’s proximity in the here and now can be seen as two dimensions of the same phenomenon: the coming Lord is already near.

A further dichotomy to consider is that between means and end; this dichotomy is, logically, relativized in prefigurative approaches, as the end is always already present in the means used to achieve it (or this should be the case at least). For the understanding of peace in Philippians, this is of relevance as the behavior of the Philippians that mediates God’s peace, as it was argued above to be the case, is not merely a technique to achieve something that is distinct from the procedure itself; rather God’s peace, the eschatological “end”, of the community, is already present in the “means”, i.e., the community’s practice and way of life employed to journey towards this end. Another way of putting it would be that the mediation of God’s peace and, with that, the presence of the God of peace takes place because the community’s being drawn into a fuller life in Christ takes place through an ongoing (and explorative) practice of life in Christ already (with a formulation that somewhat circumvents the lurking question as to the initiative and the agency involved in all of this in relation to Paul’s general views on divine and human agency).³⁷

Closely connected to the question of future and present is that of presence and absence, given that God’s peace and with that the presence of the God of peace is on the one hand a reality in the life of the Philippian community, or, at least, it can be a reality, while on the other it is also something that is not (yet) there, or not fully. Also, if, as it will be addressed below, it makes sense to view the peace that Paul refers to as distinct from other kinds of peace, then the absence of this kind of peace in the world at large and its presence in the ἐκκλησία overlap and the imagery that Paul uses in Phil. 2:15 may well be

applicable here as well (. . . ἵνα γένησθε ἄμεμπτοι καὶ ἀκέραιοι, τέκνα θεοῦ ἄμωμα μέσον γενεᾶς σκολιᾶς καὶ διεστραμμένης, ἐν οἷς φαίνεσθε ὡς φωστῆρες ἐν κόσμῳ). Although God's new world is largely absent, it is at the same time very much present, at least in the experience of the Philippian Christ devotees.

Also, the distinction between ideal and reality and with that mind and body is of relevance, given that the "idea" of God's peace is presented as being there in and through the praxis of the Philippian ἐκκλησία; whatever images or concepts of peace the congregation may have, it is through its developing embodiment of life in Christ (through the practice of particular virtues and other forms of behavior) that it becomes clear what these are, not primarily through conceptual refinement. The social experiment or laboratory that the community is leads to a discovery as to which means agree with the imagined end through the experience of God's peace (in the sense of a social order in the community of a particular quality) in the ἐκκλησία. This is of importance, as it provides another reason for moving beyond "peace" as an inner feeling of being at peace, or the like.

Next, and agreeing with what was said about the relationship between presence and absence, the dichotomy between center and margin is of importance. What plays a role here is the fairly marginal social position of the Philippian community as it seems to be under duress (cf., for instance, Phil. 1:27–30 and also ch. 3, internal strife is discussed in ch. 4),³⁸ while Paul himself writes out of prison.³⁹ From one perspective, then, the Philippian ἐκκλησία is marginal, yet given the presence in it of the social reality of God's world to come, it is at the same time at the center of things, a state of affairs that may well contribute to a sense of self-esteem and the development of resilience in a community such as the one that Paul addresses. In any case, also here, two kinds of reality coexist, the "empirical" reality of the marginal situation of the Philippian congregation and the "theological" reality of its prefigurative embodiment of God's world to come, which is real at an even deeper level than that of sociology.

Finally, leaving the series of dichotomies that have served as a way of structuring the past few paragraphs, two other observations can be made. They both have to do with the exploratory nature of prefigurative strategies. First, as groups engaging in prefigurative politics are commonly seen as social experiments and as early Christianity can certainly be seen as such,⁴⁰ viewing peace from the vantage point of prefigurative strategies underlines its experimental dimension. Engaging in forms of social life that agree with God's peace (or the God of peace) is more than executing a particular plan or living according to a certain blueprint, but rather it means experimentally exploring which forms of life together indeed align with this peace (and this God). Second, and related to this, is the dimension of the unknown,⁴¹ which is inherent in experimenting, given that all experimentation is aimed at discovering what is unknown. This also means that the precise kind of behavior that the Philippians are to engage in as part of their being in Christ and hence being ordered according to God's peace is also something that needs to be discovered through trial, error and evaluation—this, in fact, fits Paul's terminology in Phil. 4, as it is rather open and leaves it to the Philippians to discern what is really true, honorable, good, etc. (v. 8). Beyond this, it also fits the general ad hoc and discursive nature of the Pauline correspondence, in which theory and practice befitting the life in Christ is developed through working through and reflecting on concrete cases and questions.⁴²

8. Peace and Politics

A recurring discussion about the topic of peace in the New Testament is as to its relationship to peace in the Greco-Roman world at large, especially in relation to the so-called *Pax Romana*,⁴³ i.e., the imperial peace, which is evaluated in rather different ways by different authors, with some emphasizing its colonial and repressive nature, while others stress the stability and space for development that it created. Such ambivalence is also associated with Roman monuments dedicated to peace, such as the *Ara Pacis* in Rome and the *Templum Pacis* in the same city—with the first being constructed on the occasion of Augustus' return from successful campaigns of conquest and repression in Hispania

and Gallia and the second being built following the success of Vespasian and Titus in the Jewish War (the spoils of which contributed to financing the edifice). An accompanying question is as to whether the New Testament authors intentionally took a stance vis-à-vis such views of peace and were thus deliberately anti-imperial in their *modus operandi* or whether this is not the case and they sought, rather, either to live in peace and quietness or in an overarching apocalyptic worldview that was not aimed at the Roman empire *per se*. The following observations can be made based on the above considerations.

First, as peace is seen as a form of social order, the question naturally arises as to its origins and profile, which has, when it comes to the relationship with broader views of peace and the like, at least the following aspects. To begin with, the various forms of behavior that are mentioned in Phil. 4:5–6.8–9 are not particularly controversial, in fact, certainly in vv. 8–9, Paul seems to be appealing to commonly held values (ὅσα ἐστὶν ἀληθῆ, ὅσα σεμνά, ὅσα δίκαια, ὅσα ἀγνά, ὅσα προσφιλή, ὅσα εὐφρημα, εἴ τις ἀρετὴ καὶ εἴ τις ἔπαινος, ταῦτα λογίζεσθε). Second, however, the origin of the peace is of interest, given that it is God's peace and, although the expression ἡ εἰρήνη τοῦ θεοῦ (v. 7) or ὁ θεὸς τῆς εἰρήνης (v. 9) does not have an especially outspoken profile, tying the first to Christ (. . . ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, v. 7) and the second to Paul's example (ἄ καὶ ἐμάθετε καὶ παρελάβετε καὶ ἠκούσατε καὶ εἶδετε ἐν ἐμοί, ταῦτα πράσσετε, v. 9) changes matters, given that these are two figures that lived (and, in the first case, died) in marked tension with those in charge of maintaining the peace and upholding the desired social order in the Roman empire. Christ was crucified and Paul was, at the time of writing of his letter, imprisoned. At the very least, this suggests that participating in God's peace can be at odds with the peace of the Roman empire. This does not amount to an outright challenge or an actively anti-imperial stance, but it is clear that if the values and forms of behavior mentioned in vv. 5–6.8–9 are to be understood from the vantage point of Paul and Christ, some controversy and tension is to be expected. In addition, and in order to return to a detail of the text, i.e., the use of the military term φρουρήσει, stating that the preservation of hearts and minds comes from (this) God's peace, this at least relativizes other forms of protection, such as the one offered by the structures and institutions of the Roman empire.⁴⁴

Second, the focus of the use of peace in Phil. 4:7.9 is primarily on it being God's peace and with that a mode of presence of the God of peace, mediated through the life in Christ of the community. In other words, it has a positive not a negative orientation. Naturally, because it has its own profile (as stressed in the previous point), tension with other ideals concerning peace and order emerges, yet it would seem that this is only as a corollary of the positive orientation chosen. Therefore, tensions arise because of what the Christ devotees in Philippi strive for and whose examples they follow, not because they agitate against something or someone. Such tensions could arise, for instance, when worshiping someone who had been executed as an insurrectionist (or bandit—or both) as one's lord and god and also, given the vindication of the humble and humiliated involved in the resurrection of this person, rejecting commonly held values (as Paul does extensively in Phil. 3), or when taking one's cue from an imprisoned leader, who proclaims a message that there is a power far superior to that of the empire, i.e., of the God and father of Jesus Christ, who rose him from the dead.

Of course, many other aspects of Philippians could also be considered here, such as the reference to alternative citizenship in Phil. 3:20,⁴⁵ yet for the present purposes these considerations need to suffice. On their basis, it can be proposed that as Philippians is dealing with a social order (i.e., that of life in Christ) that is distinct from the dominant social order of the Roman empire or that of the colony of Philippi, political implications are at the very least a corollary of what Paul is writing to his beloved Christ devotees in this city.⁴⁶

9. Concluding Observations

The conclusions to this study can be relatively brief. The main points that have been argued are that, when understanding Paul's references to peace as a reference to a

social order, this is best understood as a key dimension (or even *pars pro toto*) for God's upcoming new world that is already present "in Christ." As the Philippian community is called upon to stand firm in Christ (Phil. 4:1, ἐν κυρίῳ)—which is, due to devotional and ethical practices (vv. 5–6.8–9), to result in the experience of God's peace or the God of peace (the former likely being a metonymy for the latter)—which must be understood as both a present and a future reality, the Philippian community can be seen as prefiguring God's future world, characterized by peace as *concretum pro abstracto* or *pars pro toto* of the "good life", both according to Greco-Roman and Jewish understandings of the term, by inhabiting this world now already in their communal life.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement: All data used in this contribution have been published and are available through scholarly editions.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

Notes

¹ In what follows, I will not occupy myself with proposals to view Philippians as a composite letter, with one reason being that I am not convinced by them (see Smit 2013, pp. 39–52) and another that the segment Phil. 4:4–9 will, by and large, be discussed on its own merits, and in the broader context of the undisputed Pauline letters, arguments based on the structure of the canonical Epistle to the Philippians will, in other words, play a very limited role. For this question, see also (Popkes 2004, pp. 246–47). One aspect that concerns the present pericope is whether v. 8 is a remnant of the conclusion of a letter that has been incorporated into canonical Philippians; this may be, but, besides being a rather inelegant way of editing, it can also indicate a continuation of the line of thought (cf. 1 Cor. 7:29; Heb. 10:16), while the references to peace also give the text a kind of coherence that speaks against separating vv. 8–9a from what precedes it redaction-critically, as (Standhartinger 2021, p. 268), suggests (see 14–23 for the full redaction-critical proposal). Of the recent literature, Castillo Elizondo (2022) could not be consulted.

² A primarily temporal interpretation is preferred here and in what follows, as it has been recently proposed by, for instance, (Szerlip 2020, pp. 225–45), who offers a wealth of linguistic and conceptual support (kind reference of Dr Isaac Blois). See for considerations about a more spatial interpretation, e.g., (Popkes 2004, pp. 251–52), and (Guthrie 2023, p. 282). One reason for emphasizing the temporal is the likely proximity of the expression used here to Μαράνα θά (1 Cor. 16:22) that is predominantly eschatological, see, e.g., (Walter 1998, pp. 93, 100–1), and (Standhartinger 2021, p. 274). Yet, as it will be explored further below, what is at stake in Phil. 4 is also the coming Lord who is now already near (through the peace that Paul mentions). In other words, in the end one is dealing with a false dichotomy between interpretations that emphasize the future at the expense of the present and vice versa.

³ One reason for thinking this is that it is precisely the thinking of Paul that has served as an inspiration for philosophers such as (Agamben 2005). See, for instance, Suzan Sierksma-Agteres (2024).

⁴ In doing so, this paper further develops ideas that were put forward in relation to other aspects of (early) Christian tradition in extant publications, elements of which will recur in what follows. See, for instance, Smit (2022, 2023a, 2023b, 2024).

⁵ The connection between the injunction to rejoice and the exhortations that follow has been constructed variously and cannot be the topic of extensive discussion here, though little of what follows depends on that; although, the connection between εὐρίνη and χαρὰ in Romans 14:17 would invite exploring a connection. For a brief survey of views on the relationship between Phil. 4:4 and 4:5ff., see: (Snyman 2007, pp. 233–34).

⁶ But not to the extent that the assumption of a combination of letters becomes necessary, also in a continuing text a new emphasis can be indicated through such literary means. See, e.g., Bockmuehl (1997, p. 249).

⁷ See, e.g., (Morgan 2020, p. 163), (Standhartinger 2021, p. 269). Cf. also Bockmuehl (1997, p. 238), who also stresses that what follows in vv. 4–9 with its focus on good relationships contrasts with the strife addressed in vv. 2–3 (Bockmuehl 1997, p. 243).

⁸ For criticism of this possibility, see (Morgan 2020, p. 28); εὐρίνη, which could, as (Breytenbach 2010, pp. 228–31), have argued, just as well be a variation on a (common) salutation formula referring to peace and mercy (as it also occurs in Jude 2: Ἐλεος ὑμῶν καὶ εὐρίνη).

⁹ With many, e.g., (Walter 1998, p. 94), (Standhartinger 2021, p. 276).

¹⁰ As it has been noted variously, see, e.g., (Popkes 2004, p. 253), and (Morgan 2020, p. 172) (literature).

¹¹ On which see (Breytenbach 2011).

- 12 See, for a discussion of the eschatological and inaugurated nature, also (Gorman 2013) and also (Roberts Gaventa 2013, pp. 71–72), notes the tension between the already and the not yet.
- 13 Standhartinger (2021, p. 276), points to the fact that the peace of God is personified here (and only here), which would be one reason to view it as a circumlocution for God's presence (metonymy). As Paul does wish the presence of the God of peace with his correspondents towards the end of some of his letters (Rom. 15:33; 16:20; 2 Cor. 13:11; 1 Thess. 5:24), while usually wishing them peace in his salutations, the two may well be regarded as somewhat interchangeable: peace implies the presence of the God of peace and vice versa.
- 14 Hawthorne and Martin (2004, pp. 246–54), also Standhartinger (2021, p. 275), and Bockmuehl (1997, p. 247). This can lead to some theological anxiety, cf. e.g., (Reumann 2008, pp. 640–41).
- 15 Vgl. (Popkes 2004, p. 253), 'Das Verb in V. 7b steht im Futur, nicht im Konjunktiv. Mehr als ein frommer Wunsch, nämlich eine Zusage und Verheißung wird den Philippnern zuteil.' Cf. also (Standhartinger 2021, p. 275).
- 16 For a discussion of the eschatological nature of peace, see also, e.g., (De Villiers 2009, pp. 15–17), esp. p. 17, offering a characteristic of such peace: '... peace is not merely an inner experience of individuals, but a state under God's rule that comprises creation and humanity as a whole and inspires people in a new time and dispensation to live righteously, peacefully and joyfully.'
- 17 Of course, when operating on the basis of a chronology of Paul's letters that place Philippians after Romans as Paul's final letter, this caution can be waived. For a discussion as to where Phil. was written, see (Smit 2013, pp. 52–55).
- 18 See (Wengst 1986, p. 222): 'Der Friede, der menschlichen Verstand übersteigt, der alles übertrifft, «was der menschliche Verstand leiten kann» (Gnilka, Phil 171) und—erst recht—was Menschen bewerkstelligen können, ist gewiß nur von Gott her zu erwarten; aber wenn dieser Frieden das Denken und Wollen der Glaubenden geradezu in seinen Gewahrsam nimmt, dann bestimmt er auch ihr handeln, gibt ihnen Richtung und Perspektive.'
- 19 The more general exhortations in v. 8 are interpreted through the lens of Paul's own example, cf. Wojtkowiak (2012, pp. 255–56), Hawthorne and Martin (2004, p. 253), Heil (2010, pp. 156–57), helpfully using the concept of embodiment. On Paul's use of himself as an example in Philippians in general, see also (Smit 2014).
- 20 What cannot be pursued here is the question of physical mediation, given that the behavior that the Philippians are called upon to engage in is social and, as it necessarily involves bodies, also physical or material in nature. It would be inviting to consider this both from the vantage point of the perspective of the paradigm of material religion, which, as formulated by Meyer, views religion as 'a medium of absence that posits and sets out to bridge a gap between the here and now and something "beyond"' (Meyer 2015, p. 336), as well as from the perspective of sacramental theology—the two perspectives can cohere, or this is at least proposed with regard to another early Christian body, that of Ignatius of Antioch by Smit (2020b). For a consideration of the ancient and contemporary liturgical ritual of the peace, which can also be said to have a sacramental character, see (Smit 2020a).
- 21 Such a rather sacramental perspective on the agency of the Philippians is also supported by Guthrie (2023, p. 285): 'God uses *right thinking* and *right doing*, learned from the example of mentors as agents of God's peace, to buttress believers against life's anxieties.'
- 22 See (Schapdick 2010, p. 257).
- 23 One example would be (Hawthorne and Martin 2004, p. 246): 'Paul seems here to be referring to the tranquillity of God's own eternal being. . . , the peace that God himself has. . . , the calm serenity that characterizes God's very natures and that grateful, trusting Christians are welcome to share. . .' See more recently also (Holloway 2017, p. 183) (with reference to the motif of the *tranquillitas animi*, but no further discussion), as well as (Guthrie 2023, p. 284) (both without really considering alternative interpretations).
- 24 See, along these lines, the condensed argument of (Focant 2010).
- 25 See the convincing collation of evidence offered by Dormandy (2021). Dormandy also offers a survey of pertinent opinion on more theological and psychological interpretations of peace both in general (Dormandy 2021, pp. 220–23) and with regard to Phil. 4:6–9 (Dormandy 2021, pp. 238–39), which will not be repeated here; as the survey of εἰρήνη in Paul's (undisputed) letters below will show, virtually only its use in Rom. 5:1 has a direct connection with reconciliation with God, even if peace is just as consistently associated with God as its origin.
- 26 See (Kreinecker 2010, pp. 105–6), equally working on the basis of papyri. Such views are also supported by research on peace in the Bible at large, see for surveys, e.g., (Smelik 2005) and (Kunz-Lübcke and Mayordomo 2021).
- 27 This diverges from the view put forward by (Dormandy 2021, p. 239): 'Paul is in fact saying that God, by his εἰρήνη, will cause the world to work in a way such that the hearts and minds of his readers are kept in Christ.' The peace is not the source of the behavior of the Philippians but its result, even though it is the case that this peace will have an effect on the hearts and minds of the Philippians. See for the position advanced here, e.g., (O'Brien 1991, p. 496), 'the peace that he bestows or gives. . . is thus equivalent to the eschatological salvation that has been effected in Christ Jesus.'
- 28 As it is variously recognized, see, e.g., (Hawthorne and Martin 2004, pp. 244–45), also underlining the simultaneity of the presence and the absence of the lord.
- 29 See for earlier explorations of this interface Smit (2022, 2023a, 2023b); the outline of the theory presented here is indebted to the last-mentioned essay.

- 30 van de Sande (2017, 2019).
- 31 (Leach 2013, p. 1004).
- 32 Usually, reference is made to (Boggs 1977).
- 33 See, for instance, the elaboration of this theme by (Swain 2019).
- 34 ‘Religious’ is used in a very general sense here; the term is, at least to the extent that it suggests a distinction between the sacred and the secular and the private and the public spheres, of course, not really applicable to first-century CE social movements or cultic groups.
- 35 See, for instance, (Stern 2017). An insightful study (as of yet not published as a monograph) is (Wan 2016).
- 36 See on this, e.g., the essays in (Gildenhard et al. 2019), as well as in (Dijkstra et al. 2017).
- 37 See also the careful formulations of (Guthrie 2023, p. 285), emphasizing God’s use of people as agents of peace.
- 38 Wojtkowiak (2012, p. 255), rightly points out that also the emphasis on prayer and the need for protection mentioned in Phil. 4:6–9 point to a situation of distress.
- 39 Hawthorne and Martin (2004, p. 245), stress that the call μηδὲν ἐν μεριμνᾶτε is anything but vacuous, given this situation.
- 40 As I have argued before, see (Smit 2023a, 2023b).
- 41 This topic was explored fruitfully in a workshop in the context of the joint colloquium of the Amsterdam Centre for New Testament Studies (Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam) and the Centre of Contextual Biblical Interpretation (Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam/Protestant Theological University) on 1 December 2023; I am grateful to the input provided by Dr Suzan Sierksma-Agteres, Dr Mathijs van de Sande through their responses to my contribution and Dr Klazina Staat and Prof. Dr Evert van der Zweerde in the discussion.
- 42 On the significance of error in this respect, see, with regard to ritual, also (Smit 2021).
- 43 Both on a macro and on a micro level, the Roman context is of importance, as Philippi was part and parcel of the Roman empire as such and it was a Roman colony with, as it is often stressed, strong ties with Roman culture and ideology. Cf. with regard to peace, for instance (Dormandy 2021, p. 238): “[T]he Roman background is particularly important for understanding Philippians. Philippi was a Roman colony and the Philippians could hardly have failed to see how Paul’s εἰρήνη contrasted with the pax Romana.” See similarly, (Wojtkowiak 2023, p. 68), ‘Die Adressatengemeinde lebt in der Colonia Iulia Augusta Philippensis, welche unter den römischen Kolonien in singulärer Weise von römischer Kultur geprägt ist.’ See also Pilhofer (1995, pp. 115–23); Wengst (1986), remains a benchmark study.
- 44 See, e.g., (Hawthorne and Martin 2004, p. 247), cf. (Standhartinger 2021, p. 275; Reumann 2008, p. 637; Szerlip 2020, p. 239), also notes that στῆκετε in 4:1 is a military term.
- 45 For a review of some research, see (Wojtkowiak 2023, pp. 69–70); the idea that an orientation towards heaven is merely ethical and not political does seem to miss the point, as such an orientation involves a strong relativization of the earthly state of affairs—see for this proposal (Wischmeyer 2013, pp. 307–10), and also Standhartinger’s argument (Standhartinger 2021, pp. 277–78) that Paul’s considerations match Stoic ideas does not need to the conclusion that social criticism is not involved; even if Paul wants to suggest, along Stoic lines, that a heavenly citizenship (or ‘commonwealth’) is to be the model for the earthly state of affairs, then a critical tension is created between the two (which was precisely the point of this Stoic notion). Ebel’s earlier considerations remain (more) convincing, see (Ebel 2015).
- 46 In agreement with, for instance, (Wojtkowiak 2023, p. 71), ‘In keinem der für die Diskussion um eine anti-römische Ausrichtung des Philipperbriefs zentralen Punkte dürfte Paulus das explizite Ziel verfolgen, sich gegen das Imperium Romanum zu wenden. Alle Punkte besitzen jedoch kritische Implikationen.’

References

- Agamben, Giorgio. 2005. *The Time That Remains: A Commentary on the Letter to the Romans*. Translated by Patricia Dailey. Redwood City: Stanford University Press.
- Bockmuehl, Markus. 1997. *The Epistle to the Philippians*. Peabody: Hendrickson.
- Boggs, Carl. 1977. Prefigurative Communism, and the Problem of Workers’ Control. *Radical America* 11: 99–122.
- Breytenbach, Cilliers. 2010. *Grace, Reconciliation, Concord: The Death of Christ in Graeco-Roman Metaphors*. Leiden: Brill, pp. 228–31.
- Breytenbach, Cilliers. 2011. Versöhnung, Stellvertretung und “Sühne”. In *Grace, Reconciliation, Concord*. Leiden: Brill, pp. 9–33.
- Castillo Elizondo, Jorge Armando. 2022. *Alegrarse, un itinerario hacia el Dios del la Paz: Estudio exegético-teológico de 1Tes 5, 12–24 y Flp 4: 2–9*. Rome: Pontifical Gregorian University.
- De Villiers, Pieter G. R. 2009. Peace in the Pauline Letters: A Perspective on Biblical Spirituality. *Neotestamentica* 43: 1–26.
- Dijkstra, Tamara M., Inger N.I. Kuin, Muriel Moser, and David Weidgenannt, eds. 2017. *Strategies of Remembering in Greece under Rome (100 BC–100 AD)*. Leiden: Sidestone.
- Dormandy, Michael. 2021. How to Understand What Passes All Understanding: Using the Documentary Papyri to Understand Εἰρήνη in Paul. *New Testament Studies* 67: 220–40. [CrossRef]

- Ebel, Eva. 2015. Unser *πολίτευμα* ist in den Himmeln« (Phil 3: 20). Ein attraktives Angebot für viele Bewohnerinnen und Bewohner der römischen Kolonie Philippi. In *Der Philipperbrief des Paulus in der hellenistisch-römischen Welt (WUNT 353)*. Edited by Jörg Frey, Benjamin Schließer and Veronika Niederhofer. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck Tübingen, pp. 153–68.
- Focant, Camille. 2010. La paix de Dieu, elle qui surpasse toute intelligence (Ph 4,7). In *Bible et paix*. Edited by Eberhard Bons, Daniel Gerber, Pierre Keith and Claude Coulot. Paris: Cerf, pp. 239–49.
- Gildenhart, Ingo, Ulrich Gotter, Wolfgang Havener, and Louise Hodgson, eds. 2019. *Augustus and the Destruction of History: The Politics of the Past in Early Imperial Rome*. Cambridge: Cambridge Philological Society.
- Gorman, Michael J. 2013. The Lord of Peace: Christ Our Peace in Pauline Theology. *Journal for the Study of Paul and His Letters* 3: 219–53. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Guthrie, George H. 2023. *Philippians*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan.
- Hawthorne, Gerald F., and Ralph P. Martin. 2004. *Philippians*. Nashville: Nelson.
- Heil, John Paul. 2010. *Philippians*. Atlanta: SBL, pp. 156–57.
- Holloway, Paul A. 2017. *Philippians. A Commentary*. Minneapolis: Fortress.
- Kreinecker, Christina. 2010. 2. *Thessaloniker*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, pp. 105–6.
- Kunz-Lübcke, Andreas, and Moisés Mayordomo. 2021. *Frieden und Krieg*. Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagsbuchhandlung.
- Leach, Darcy K. 2013. Prefigurative Politics. In *The Wiley-Blackwell Encyclopedia of Social and Political Movements*. Edited by David A. Snow, Donatella Della Porta, Bert Klandermans and Doug McAdam. Malden: Wiley Blackwell, pp. 1004–6.
- Meyer, Birgit. 2015. Picturing the Invisible. Visual Culture and the Study of Religion. *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* 27: 333–60. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Morgan, Teresa. 2020. *Being 'in Christ' in the Letters of Paul: Saved Through Christ and in His Hands*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.
- O'Brien, Peter T. 1991. *The Epistle to the Philippians*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Pilhofer, Peter. 1995. *Philippi. Die erste christliche Gemeinde Europas*. Tübingen: Mohr.
- Popkes, Wiard. 2004. Philipper 4.4–7: Aussage und situativer Hintergrund. *New Testament Studies* 50: 246–56. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Reumann, John. 2008. *Philippians*. New Haven: Yale University Press, pp. 640–41.
- Roberts Gaventa, Beverly. 2013. The Rhetoric of Violence and the God of Peace in Paul's Letters to the Romans. In *Paul, John, and Apocalyptic Eschatology: Studies in Honour of Martinus C. De Boer*. Edited by Jan Krans, L. J. Lietaert Peerbolte, Peter-Ben Smit and Arie W. Zwiep. Leiden: Brill, pp. 61–75.
- Schapidick, Stefan. 2010. *Eschatisches Heil mit eschatischer Anerkennung*. Göttingen: V&R UniPress.
- Sierksma-Agteres, Suzan. 2024. De tijd is nabij: De toe-eigening van de toekomst in Bijbelse crisisperiodes. Unpublished paper, presented at the Vereniging voor Theologie, Utrecht, The Netherlands, 5 January 2024.
- Smelik, Klaas. 2005. *Een tijd van oorlog, een tijd van vrede. Bezetting en bevrijding in de Bijbel*. Zoetermeer: Boekencentrum.
- Smit, Peter-Ben. 2013. *Paradigms of Being in Christ: Paul's Use of Exempla in Philippians*. Library of New Testament Studies. London: Bloomsbury.
- Smit, Peter-Ben. 2014. Paul, Plutarch and the Practice of Self-Praise. *New Testament Studies* 341–59. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Smit, Peter-Ben. 2020a. De vrede van Christus! De vredegroet in het spanningsveld van theologie en praktijk. *Kerk en Theologie* 71: 237–49.
- Smit, Peter-Ben. 2020b. On Being Consumed: The Martyred Body as a Site of Divine—Human Encounter in the Letters of Ignatius of Antioch. *Religions* 11: 637. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Smit, Peter-Ben. 2021. *Felix Culpa. Ritual Failure and Theological Innovation in Early Christianity*. Leiden: Brill.
- Smit, Peter-Ben. 2022. Exploring the Eschaton. The Lord's Supper as a Cultural Technique Enabling Prefigurative Politics. *Yearbook for Ritual and Liturgical Studies* 38: 59–72. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Smit, Peter-Ben. 2023a. Prefiguring God's World: Prefigurative Politics and the Early Jesus Movement. In *'Trinkt von dem Wein, den ich mischte!'/ 'Drink of the Wine which I have Mingled!'* Edited by Stefan Münger, Nancy Rahn and Patrick Wyssmann. Leuven: Peeters, pp. 451–66.
- Smit, Peter-Ben. 2023b. Ritual und Präfiguration: Die Performanz des Eschatons in einer eschatologischen Gemeinschaft. In *Rituale im Neuen Testament und im frühen Christentum*. Edited by Malte Cramer and Daniel Klinkmann. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, pp. 187–201.
- Smit, Peter-Ben. 2024. Prefiguration of the Nation: The Soteriology and Ecclesiology of the Iglesia Filipina Independiente in the Early 20th Century. *Exchange* 53: 23–45. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Snyman, André H. 2007. Philippians 4:1–9 from a Rhetorical Perspective. *Verbum et Ecclesia* 28: 225–43, 233–34. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Standhartinger, Angela. 2021. *Der Philipperbrief*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.
- Stern, Sacha. 2017. Calendars, Politics, and Power Relations in the Roman Empire. In *The Construction of Time in Antiquity: Ritual, Art, and Identity*. Edited by Jonathan Ben-Dov and Lutz Doering. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 31–49.
- Swain, Dan. 2019. Not Not but Not yet: Present and Future in Prefigurative Politics. *Political Studies* 67: 47–62. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Szerlip, Brandon S. 2020. Paul's Use of the Old Testament in His Letter to the Philippians. Ph.D. dissertation, Westminster Theological Seminary, Glenside, PA, USA; pp. 225–45.
- van de Sande, Mathijs. 2017. The Prefigurative Power of the Common(s). In *Perspectives on Commoning: Autonomist Principles and Practices*. Edited by Guido Ruivenkamp and Andy Hilton. London: Zed, pp. 25–63.
- van de Sande, Mathijs. 2019. Prefiguration. In *Critical Terms in Futures Studies*. Edited by Heike Paul. Cham: Palgrave MacMillan, pp. 227–33.

- Walter, Niklaus. 1998. Der Brief an die Philipper. In *Die Briefe and Die Philipper, Thessalonicher und an Philemon*. Edited by Niklaus Walter, Eckhart Reinmuth and Peter Lampe. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.
- Wan, Wei Hsien. 2016. Reconfiguring the Universe: The Contest for Time and Space in the Roman Imperial Cults and 1 Peter. Ph.D. dissertation, University of Exeter, Exeter, UK.
- Wengst, Klaus. 1986. *Pax Romana. Anspruch und Wirklichkeit*. München: Kaiser.
- Wischmeyer, Oda. 2013. Philippi und Jerusalem. Sind Phil 3, 20 und Gal 4, 24–26 politische oder ethische Texte? *Theologische Zeitschrift* 69: 298–319.
- Wojtkowiak, Heiko. 2012. *Christologie und Ethik im Philipperbrief: Studien zur Handlungsorientierung einer frühchristlichen Gemeinde in paganer Umwelt*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.
- Wojtkowiak, Heiko. 2023. An die Philipper und gegen das Imperium Romanum? Potenziell Anti-Römisches im Philipperbrief. *Verkündigung und Forschung* 68: 68–61. [[CrossRef](#)]

Disclaimer/Publisher’s Note: The statements, opinions and data contained in all publications are solely those of the individual author(s) and contributor(s) and not of MDPI and/or the editor(s). MDPI and/or the editor(s) disclaim responsibility for any injury to people or property resulting from any ideas, methods, instructions or products referred to in the content.