

PHILIPPIANS 2:5–11 IN RECENT STUDIES: SOME EXEGETICAL CONCLUSIONS*

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President Clowney, Trustees, Faculty Colleagues, Visiting
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One of the study projects I had in view in requesting relief from certain deanly duties for at least a "semi" study leave this semester was to catch up on what has been written regarding the exegesis of this crucial but notoriously difficult christological passage since R. P. Martin summarized the literature from 1900 through 1963 in his exhaustive study entitled *Carmen Christi*.¹ This reasearch was undertaken with a view to my assigned classroom responsibilities, as we regularly devote much attention to the interpretation of this passage in the required course in the Doctrine of Christ; but when reminded of this occasion I thought there might be some interest in my sharing at least some of the results of this research.

Titles are often a problem, I find. I inserted the reference to "conclusions" to encourage you to anticipate that we would not merely be surveying opposing views, but I would not want to suggest more definitiveness in these conclusions than actually exists. We must always remain open to new light being shed on our understanding of the Scriptures, particularly of such a thorny text. The title refers to verses 5–11 because the apostle's christological statement extends through verse 11, but in this hour our comments can reach only into verse 7.

Now, to some this might seem a strange topic for one appointed to the department of Systematic Theology. As Professor John Murray once wrote in his *Westminster Theological Jour-*

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¹ R. P. Martin, *Carmen Christi: Philippians ii.5-11 in Recent Interpretation and in the Setting of Early Christian Worship* (Cambridge: University Press, 1967).

nal articles defining systematic theology: "All other departments of theological discipline contribute their findings to systematic theology and it brings all the wealth of knowledge derived from these disciplines to bear upon the more inclusive systematization which it undertakes."² And the picture some might naively and incorrectly draw is of the systematic theologian sitting down like a master jigsaw puzzler, taking what is handed him by the exegetes, by the biblical theologians, by the historians of doctrine, and saying: "Now boys let's see what it looks like when we put it all together!" The problem, of course, is that so many of the exegetical pieces "contributed" to the systematic theologian do not fit together! Many must be discarded. And the systematizer finds that he must begin by evaluating them and deciding which really are a part of the big picture and make their contribution to it. And that is why one who teaches systematic theology cannot avoid the kind of study before us, no matter how inadequate for it he might feel. He cannot assign the evaluative task and the responsibility for it to someone else.

Let me begin by reminding you of the wide acceptance of the argument presented by Ernst Lohmeyer in 1928 to the effect that the passage introduced by the relative pronoun ὅς ("who") in verse 6 was a pre-Pauline hymn here employed by the apostle.³ That conclusion is said to rest upon a recognition of the relative pronoun as an appropriate formula for introducing a quotation (Comp. I Tim. 3:16, "great is the mystery of godliness who . . ."); the rhythmic quality and exalted language of the passage the number of *hapax legomena* and other unusual, non-Pauline vocabulary, and the alleged absence of Pauline ideas and the presence of non-Pauline ones.

In his 1976 article, Jerome Murphy-O'Connor states that Martin's earlier conviction that "the verdict which sees the hymn as a separate composition inserted into the epistolary prose of Paul's writing, commands an almost universal respect in these

² John Murray, "Systematic Theology," *The Westminster Theological Journal*, XXV (Nov., 1962 to May, 1963), 136.

³ Ernst Lohmeyer, *Kyrios Jesus: Eine Untersuchung zu Phil. 2,5-11* (Heidelberg, 1928). C. H. Talbert states that "the first person to isolate the passage and call it a hymn was Arthur S. Way in the first edition of his translation of the epistles (1901)." "The Problem of Pre-Existence in Phil. 2:6-11," *Journal of Biblical Literature*, LXXXVI (1967), 141-142.

clays," continues to be confirmed.⁴ This is not to say, however, that defenders of Pauline authorship are no longer to be found. Such scholars as Morna Hooker and L. Hammerich again call attention to the verbal similarities (as well as ideal similarities) between the alleged hymn and passages which precede and which follow in the epistle, similarities earlier emphasized by Cerfaux:⁵ ἡγήσατο in verse 6 ("did not regard") and ἡγούμενοι in verse 3 ("regard one another") and in chapter 3; ἐκένωσεν in verse 7 ("he emptied himself") and κενοδοξίαν in verse 3 ("empty conceit"); ἑταπεινώσεν in verse 8 ("he humbled himself") and ταπεινοφροσύνη in verse 3 ("humility"); εὑρεθεῖς in verse 8 ("being found") and εὑρεθῶ in 3:9 ("that I may be found"); ἔχαρίσατο in verse 9 ("gave him the name") and ἔχαρίσθη in 1:29 ("it has been given to you"); εἰς δόξαν θεοῦ πατρὸς in verse 11 ("unto the glory of God the Father") and εἰς δόξαν...θεοῦ in 1:11 ("unto the glory of God") and especially the 6 verbal similarities found in 3:20, 21 — ὑπάρχει, κύριον, μετασχηματίσει, ταπεινώσεως, σύμμορφση, δόξης— and note the final words: "the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself." J. M. Furness again defends the Pauline authorship of Phil. 2:6–11 and calls attention to "the exalted, lyrical style that emerges, under similar stress of emotion, elsewhere in the apostle's writings — e.g. in I Cor. 13 and 15 ..."⁶ Howard Marshall notes that Martin made reference to such arguments but suggests that Martin should have recognized more adequately their force and should not have reached the conclusion that Paul was not the author.⁷

Now I recognize the truth of Andrew Bandstra's remark that such a question as this, whether Paul wrote verses 6–11

⁴ Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, "Christological Anthropology in Phil., II, 6-11," *Revue Biblique*, 83 (1976), 25.

⁵ Morna D. Hooker, "Philippians 2:6-11," *Jesus and Paulus: Festschrift für Werner Georg Kummel zum 70* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1975), pp. 152-153. L. L. Hammerich, *An Ancient Misunderstanding (Phil. 2,6 'robbery')* (København: Munksgaard, 1966), pp. 28-29. Lucien Cerfaux, *Christ in the Theology of St. Paul*, trans. by Geoffrey Webb and Adrian Walker (New York: Herder and Herder, 1959), p. 376.

⁶ J. M. Furness, "Behind the Philippian Hymn," *Expository Times*, LXXIX (1967-1968), 178.

⁷ J. Howard Marshall, "The Christ-Hymn in Philippians 2:5-11. A Review Article," *Tyndale Bulletin*, 19 (1968), 106 and 121.

himself or employed an earlier hymn, is "of remote concern to the minister but there is a related factor that emerges here which I believe is very important in the interpretation of the passage and needs to be emphasized. Basically I would take the approach of those British scholars whom Martin describes as inclined to grant the possibility of non-Pauline authorship "and then pass on as though the verses were authentically Paul's." There is no *a priori* theological reason for ruling out the possibility, that Paul here made use of an earlier hymn to Christ. It becomes clear, however, that opting for non-Pauline authorship is not an innocuous decision when coupled with the insistence that the passage therefore is to be interpreted altogether without regard to how Paul used it in his argument or even how Paul might have understood it.

That insistence, so damaging to the interpretive process, is made by Martin himself: "It is of the utmost importance to isolate the meaning of the terms in the hymn from the use which is made of them by Paul in the verses which precede and follow. . . . Once this is done, it becomes increasingly difficult to follow the ethical interpretation."¹⁰ (More on that specific application in just a moment.) And later in *Carmen Christi*: "there is the meaning of the passage in the context of Paul's letter; and there is a meaning of the Christ-hymn on its own. . . . It is conceivable that the two meanings may in no way coincide."¹¹ Martin goes on in that final chapter to concentrate upon the meaning of the hymn "on its own," but if that meaning does not help us to understand the meaning in the canonical letter, of what interest, other than merely historical interest, is it?

In one of the most recent studies of the passage, Murphy-O'Connor begins with the recognition of two possible levels of meaning and then states his methodological principle: "I intend to abstract entirely from the Pauline context . . . and to attempt to interpret it as an independent composition."¹² He then proves to his satisfaction that nothing in the immediate context, the hymn itself, demands the pre-existence or deity of Christ and

⁸ A. Bandstra, "'Adam' and 'the Servant' in Phil. 2:5-11," *Calvin Theological Journal*, I (1966), 213.

⁹ Martin, p. 61.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 215.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 287.

¹² Murphy-O'Connor, p. 26.

reminds us that the *general Pauline* context cannot be appealed to because Paul did not write the hymn. We begin to see some of the implications of a hermeneutical method which cuts off all appeal to parallel Pauline expressions or concepts. To be thus cut off is not to find ourselves newly open to the understanding of the passage but is to find ourselves at a hermeneutical dead-end. Morna Hooker puts it so well in a 1975 study: "If the passage is pre-Pauline, then we have no guide lines to help us in understanding its meaning. Commentators may speculate about the background — but we know very little about pre-Pauline Christianity, and nothing at all about the context in which the passage originated. It may therefore be more profitable to look first at the function of these verses in the present context and to enquire about possible parallels within Paul's own writings. For even if the material is non-Pauline, we may expect Paul himself to have interpreted it and used it in a Pauline manner."¹³

(It should be added that in the current theological climate even a willingness to grant Pauline authorship does not guarantee an interest in contextual interpretation. John Harvey is a case in point. ". . . we cannot tell, with exactitude what was in Paul's mind when he wrote (or included) the Christ hymn in this letter. Fundamentally, it is not of existential importance to us — for he was writing for people whose thought-forms were very different from our own. But what does matter, if we believe that the Bible contains God's Word to us today, is how we interpret this passage for ourselves."¹⁴)

A related problem concerns the literary structure of the hymn in its original form. To many this is the key that unlocks the meaning. Hamerton-Kelly insists that "an understanding of the hymn depends on the solution of two related problems, the structure of 2:5-11, and its background in the history of religion."¹⁵ C. H. Talbert is an extreme example of the principle that "a proper delineation of form leads to a correct interpretation of meaning."¹⁶ Finding two parallel strophes dividing after

¹³ Hooker, p. 152.

¹⁴ John Harvey, "A New Look at the Christ Hymn in Philippians 2: 6-11," *Expository Times*, 76 (1965), 338.

¹⁵ R. G. Hamerton-Kelly, *Pre-existence, Wisdom, and the Son of Man* (Cambridge: University Press, 1973), p. 156.

¹⁶ Talbert, p. 141.

λαβῶν in verse 7, Talbert argues that "parallel structure points to parallel meanings," and therefore since the second strophe unquestionably speaks of the human existence of Jesus, the first strophe must also! Thus verses 6 and 7a are a statement "not about the pre-existence of Jesus but about his earthly life."¹⁷

The problem is that few agree with Talbert's proposed structure, and those who do, disagree with his exegetical conclusion. Indeed, the student who follows the history of proposed poetic structures from Lohmeyer through Jeremias and Bultmann and Martin and others is struck by the evidently subjective and arbitrary nature of such an enterprise and becomes sceptical about suggestions that correct understanding depends upon correct versification. Again Professor Hooker states the student's conclusion very well. "The fact that different scholars produce different poetic structures makes one slightly hesitant about the value of this exercise. . . . One of the difficulties is that the passage as we have it never really fits the patterns into which the commentators try to push it; they therefore excise certain lines as Pauline glosses."¹⁸ And again, the fact is that such excisions are not helps to understanding the passage as Paul understood it.

If we may look now at verse 5, it comes as quite a surprise, I think, to the Christian entering for the first time into the vast literature dealing with the passage to note how much has been written, and with what vigor, against the so-called "ethical example" interpretation. Kasemann says that everyone from the Reformers through Adolf Schlatter interpreted the passage as a piece of ethical exhortation,¹⁹ and the unsuspecting reader will not, I think, find it difficult to understand why the passage has been interpreted that way. Whatever else may be given to us here, there is certainly an exhortation to follow the example of Christ! But ever since what has been referred to as Julius Kogel's "daring and momentous" warning against an attitudinal

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 153.

¹⁸ Hooker, p. 157.

¹⁹ Ernst Kasemann, "A Critical Analysis of Phillipians 2:5-11,7 *God and Christ: Existence and Province*, vol. 5 of *Journal for Theology and the Church*, ed. by Robert W. Funk (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), p. 47.

ethic²⁰ in 1908, scholars from Barth²¹ and Kasemann to R.P. Martin and J. A. Sanders²² have been telling us that there is no basis for such an interpretation. The following are the principle arguments that have been put forward: 1) It is necessary to insert some verb after the relative pronoun in verse 5 to fill out the sense. While ἦν ("was") is possible (NASB — "Have this attitude in (or, better, among) yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus"), it yields greater parallelism, symmetry, to insert a second (φρονεῖτε, this one an indicative following the imperative: "Think this way among yourselves which you think in Christ Jesus, i.e. as members of His Church."²³ As Kasemann puts it: "The Philippians are admonished to conduct themselves toward one another as is fitting within the realm of Christ."²⁴ 2) The phrase ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ is a technical theological term in Paul. It does not refer here to the thoughts or attitude of Christ but to the union of believers with Christ as members of His body. Thus, says Kasemann, it points to salvation-event, not example. 3) Only part of what Paul goes on to write could be thought of as providing an example to believers of humility and self-forgetfulness. Verses 9–11 become an irrelevant appendix on the ethical example interpretation. 4) Martin insists that "Paul only rarely uses the idea of the ethical example of Jesus to enforce an exhortation."²⁵

It is encouraging to find in recent studies several attempts to answer such arguments and allow us once again to see the passage as setting Christ before us as the example that is to guide the Christian in his conduct toward others. The first requirement, as we have already mentioned, is to interpret the passage in terms of its place in the flow of Paul's argument and not in terms of our supposed ability to abstract it from its context in the epistle. Then, with regard to the four arguments above presented: 1) Both Moule and Marshall point out that the now commonly accepted translation of verse 5 — "Have this attitude

²⁰ Ibid., p. 53.

²¹ Karl Barth, *Erklärung des Philipperbriefes* (Zurich: Zollikon, 1928), pp. 53-62.

²² J. A. Sanders, "Dissenting Deities and Phil. 2:6-11," *Journal of Biblical Literature*, LXXXVIII (1969), 280.

²³ Martin, p. 71.

²⁴ Kasemann, p. 84.

²⁵ Martin, p. 72.

among yourselves that you have as members of Christ's body" is tautological. It assumes that believers could adopt one attitude in their mutual relations and another as incorporated into Christ. This yields literally non-sense. It is often thought that this rendering is in line with the New Testament pattern of commanding believers to "become what they are," but that "contrast is not between two spheres of existence (Kasemann) but between an already given condition on the one hand, and the implementing of it, on the other."²⁶ There is good reason to continue to translate the second part of verse 5: "which was also in Christ Jesus." Only thus does the καὶ, retain its force.

2) This would mean that ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ is not here a reference to our incorporation into Christ but a reference to Christ's own thought or attitude. Hooker notes that we find here not the usual Pauline expression, ἐν Χριστῷ but ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, perhaps significant as a warning not to assume too quickly that the phrase here is the Pauline "code word" for union with Christ.²⁷

3) With regard to the argument that verses 9—11 do not fit the ethical example interpretation, it is not difficult, I believe, to see how those verses relate to Paul's appeal. In the closely parallel text in II Corinthians 8:9 Paul employs what Hooker refers to as the idea of interchange:²⁸ "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich." The apostle in II Timothy 2:11 records the "trust-worthy statement" that "if we died with Him, we shall also live with Him; If we endure, we shall also reign with Him." Hooker prefers to speak of "conformity" rather than "imitation," but that conformity is to come to expression both in our walking with Christ now and in our being exalted with Christ in that Day.

4) Even if Paul's appeal to the ethical example of Jesus were so rare that it appears only in Philippians 2 and II Corinthians 8:9, it would still seem clear there. But the fact is that it is not that rare. Think of Romans 15 ("Let each of us please

²⁶ C. F. D. Moule, "Further Reflexions on Phil. 2:5-11," *Apostolic History and the Gospel*, ed. by W. Ward Gasque and Ralph P. Martin (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1970), p. 266.

²⁷ Hooker, p. 154.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 155.

his neighbor for his good . . . for even Christ did not please Himself; but as it is written . . ." and verse 5: "Now may God . . . grant you to be of the same mind with one another according to Christ Jesus") and I Corinthians 11:1 ("Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ"). Ephesians 5:2; I Thessalonians 1:6 — all refer to Christ's example of self-denial and suffering. It has been argued that the use of the picture of the Isaianic Servant points to the soteriological rather than the ethical thrust of Philippians 2. But it should be noted that that very picture of the Suffering Servant plays a significant part in the ethical exhortation of the New Testament as well as in its soteriology: Mark 10:44, 45 ("Whoever wishes to be first among you shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give His life a ransom for all."); I Peter 2:21–25 ("For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps" —and then Isaiah is quoted).²⁹

To say that Warfield was on target after all in entitling his sermon on this passage, "Imitating the Incarnation,"³⁰ is not at all to reduce the gospel to following an example. Of course, in Kasemann's terms, Christ "*ist Urbild, nicht Vorbild,*" archetype not model.³¹ But we must avoid drawing a superficial antithesis between *Heilsgeschichte* and ethics. Hooker writes: "What in fact we have is a typically Pauline fusion of these two themes. The behaviour which is required of those who are in Christ is required of them — and possible for them—precisely because they are in Christ, and this being in Christ depends on the saving acts proclaimed in the gospel. The Christian response is not simply to join in the chorus of adoration and confess Jesus as Lord — but to obey the one named as Lord, and to give glory to God by being conformed to the image of his son."³² Hooker puts her finger on the theological bias often at work here when

²⁹ W. Zimmerli and J. Jeremias, *The Servant of God* (Naperville, Ill.: Allenson, 1957), p. 98.

³⁰ Benjamin B. Warfield, *The Saviour of the World* (New York: Hodder and Stoughton, n.d.), pp. 247–270; republished in *The Person and Work of Christ* (Philadelphia: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1950), pp. 563–575.

³¹ Kasemann, p. 74.

³² Hooker, p. 156.

she writes further: "It is only the dogma that the Jesus of History and the Christ of Faith belong in separate compartments that leads to the belief that the appeal to a Christian character appropriate to those who are in Christ is not linked to the pattern as seen in Jesus himself."³³

"Have this attitude among yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God . . ." Traditionally at Westminster, as elsewhere, Philippians 2:6ff. has been considered in systematics class at the point where a kenotic understanding of the Incarnation is being refuted. While there is some evidence of renewed interest in kenotic christology,³⁴ more typical of contemporary theologians is J. A. T. Robinson's dismissal of kenotic theories as "fruitless expenditures of theological ingenuity" because they assumed the pre-existence and the deity of Christ.³⁵ Whether a theologian is favorably disposed toward kenotic speculation or not, there is little inclination today to seek support for such a theory in the exegesis of Philippians 2.³⁶ The approach to the interpretation of this passage which is the gravest threat to orthodox christology at the present time is that which refuses to recognize the presence here of any reference to such supernatural categories as pre-existence and the incarnation of deity.

Again, this might seem a most surprising development. In his study R. P. Martin made brief reference to what he termed the nineteenth century Lutheran "dogmatic" view which saw the subject of verse 6 as the historical Christ, with the time of the verbs located not in some pre-temporal existence but in the course of his earthly life when he was faced with the decision whether to seek his own exaltation or to obey the Father's will.³⁷

³³ Ibid., p. 154.

³⁴ Hans Kung, *Menschwerdung Gottes* (Freiburg: Herder, c. 1970). John MacQuarrie, "Kenoticism Re-considered," *Theology*, 77 (1974), 115—124; Jurgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, trans. by R. A. Wilson and John Bowden (New York: Harper and Row, 1974) ; Karl Rahner, "On the Theology of the Incarnation," *Theological Investigations*, vol. IV (Baltimore: Helicon Press, 1966), pp. 105-120.

³⁵ J. A. T. Robinson, *The Human Face of God* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1973), p. 208.

³⁶ John G. Gibbs, "The Cosmic Scope of Redemption According to Paul," *Biblica*, 56 (1975), 27.

³⁷ Martin, p. 63.

In 1964 Martin could dismiss such an interpretation as virtually defunct,³⁸ but today it is very much alive.

John Harvey calls the "traditional exegesis" an "embarrassment" to contemporary theologians who "are discarding the two-nature theory of the Incarnation;"³⁹ and therefore he proposes that we understand verse 6 to be stating that, like Adam, Christ was a man, made in the image of God, and thus the divine nature was his from the first even as it is ours from the first. But unlike Adam, and indeed all of us except Jesus, He did not seek equality with God, but rather gave up all concern for himself and so knew that end which "simply carries on to its logical conclusion what should happen to a life which is lived entirely for God and other people — death on a cross."⁴⁰ Such an interpretation may seem singularly unconvincing, but N. K. Bakken, writing in *Interpretation*, asks that Harvey's position be taken seriously. Philippians 2:6 teaches that Christ "affirmed his creatureliness" and "emptied himself of the aspiration to 'be God'," thus becoming "the man whom God intended, and to him and through him man is again given dominion. . . ."⁴¹

We have already referred to C. H. Talbert's argument that because of the parallelism of stanzas 1 and 2, stanza 1 like stanza 2 refers to the decision of the human Jesus "to be God's servant rather than to repeat the tragedy of Adam and his sons."⁴² We have also referred to Jerome Murphy-O'Connor's lengthy recent article in *Revue Biblique* in which he argues that nothing in the language of verse 6 demands the notions of pre-existence or divinity, and that appeal to the wider context of the Pauline epistles is invalid because Paul did not write the Philippian hymn. Murphy-O'Connor, however, insists that the reference to likeness to God refers to something unique to Jesus. But since he also insists that "methodologically" a "'minimal hypothesis" which will explain that uniqueness (one which will not posit more than humanness of Jesus) must be preferred to

³⁸ "That the hymn sets forth the Incarnation of Christ in His humiliation and subsequent enthronement is universally agreed." *Ibid.*, p. viii.

³⁹ Harvey, pp. 337-338.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 338.

⁴¹ Norman K. Bakken, "The New Humanity: Christ and the Modern Age. A Study Centering in the Christ-hymn: Phil. 2:6-11," *Interpretation*, XXII (1968), p. 76.

⁴² Talbert, p. 153.

a "maximal hypothesis," the hypothesis which he favors is that it was Jesus' *sinlessness* which gave him the right to be treated as if he were God, that is, the right "to enjoy the incorruptibility in which Adam was created,"⁴³ an incorruptibility he was willing to forego in order to obey God's will even unto death; even though he admits that the heart of that hypothesis, the sinlessness of Jesus, is never referred to in the hymn itself.

D. W. B. Robinson also starts with the assumption that the subject of Philippians 2:6 is the *human* Jesus, but then proposes that the term ἄρπαγμός be understood as a reference to a rapture in a literal, passive sense — a being snatched away, like Elijah — so that what is being affirmed is that Jesus did not think equality with God consisted in being caught up, in being delivered from his adversaries by divine intervention, and so Jesus did not yield to Satan's wilderness temptation to lift him up nor to the Gethsemane temptation to seek rescue from the hour for which he had come.⁴⁴

Despite the *tour de force* displayed in some of these suggestions, one must agree with Reginald Fuller that "the attempts which have been made to eliminate pre-existence entirely from this passage . . . must be pronounced a failure."⁴⁵ As Howard Marshall notes: "It is impossible to make sense of numerous phrases in verses 6–8 if they are understood solely against the background of the earthly life of Jesus."⁴⁶ Most importantly, what would be the force of the aorist participle in 7c, γενόμενος, "being made in the likeness of men," and what would be the meaning of verse 8a, "being found in appearance as a man"? Jack Sanders convincingly argues that "the presence of ἐν ὁμοιώματι ἀνθρώπων γενόμενος, in verse 7 . . . would seem to indicate that this would have to be the first appearance of . . . Anthropos in the hymn, or, in other words, that the redeemer here first becomes Man."⁴⁷

The interpretation which begins with Christ in verse 6 as

⁴³ Murphy-O'Connor, p. 49.

⁴⁴ D. W. B. Robinson, "ἄρπαγμός: The Deliverance that Jesus Refused?" *Expository Times*, LXXX (1968-1969), 253-254.

⁴⁵ R. H. Fuller, *The Foundations of New Testament Christology* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1965), p. 235, note 9.

⁴⁶ Marshall, p. 116.

⁴⁷ Jack T. Sanders, *The New Testament Christological Hymns* (Cambridge: University Press, 1971), p. 66.

merely a man like other men simply cannot do justice to the following description of his humiliation and subsequent exaltation. As Hamerton-Kelly puts it: "The hymn demonstrates a christological interest in affirming the protological preexistence of Christ. This affirmation secures the divine nature of Christ and provides a foil against which the significance of the humiliation of the Cross becomes fully evident."⁴⁸ D. F. Hudson notes that: "There is a clear pairing of 'the divine nature,' and 'the nature of a slave,' and any fair exegesis of the passage which tries to avoid the full force of the first cannot lay any weight on the second. . . . Jesus was not merely the man who became the Man for Others, but he was the God who became the Man for Others."⁴⁹

But if we must do justice to the full force of ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ, what is the full force of that expression? For years I tried, like Warfield and Murray, to maintain the view of Lightfoot that Paul here uses μορφῇ with the sense it had acquired in Greek philosophy, particularly Aristotelian, and which Murray speaks of as "existence form . . . the sum of those characterizing qualities that make a thing the precise thing that it is."⁵⁰ Lightfoot wrote: "though μορφῇ is not the same as φύσις or οὐσία, yet the possession of the μορφῇ involves participation in the οὐσία also for μορφῇ implies not the external accidents but the essential attributes."⁵¹ But I have had to conclude that there is really very little evidence to support the conclusion that Paul uses μορφῇ in such a philosophical sense here and that my determination to hold on to that interpretation was really rooted in its attractiveness theologically. Kasemann has argued on the

⁴⁸ Hamerton-Kelley, p. 168.

⁴⁹ D. F. Hudson, "A Further Note on Phil. 2:6-11," *Expository Times*, LXXVII (1965-1966), 29.

⁵⁰ *Studies in the Person and Work of Christ*, mimeographed notes taken by students in class lectures by John Murray, but not edited in any way by Professor Murray (available in the Library, Westminster Theological Seminary), p. 36. Cf. Warfield, p. 254: ". . . the phraseology which Paul here employs was the popular use of his day, though first given vogue by the Aristotelian philosophy . . . this mode of speech resolved everything into its matter and its form, — into the base material out of which it is made, and that body of characterizing qualities which constitute it what it is."

⁵¹ J. B. Lightfoot, *Saint Paul's Epistle to the Philippians* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1953—original edition 1913), p. 110.

basis not of a classical Greek background but of a Hellenistic orientation for the meaning "mode of being" (*Daseinsweise*) and against the notion of visible manifestation.⁵² F. W. Beare and Howard Marshall adopt this translation, "mode of being," but both, I suspect, are influenced by their theological presuppositions: Bultmannian in the case of Beare, orthodox in the case of Marshall.⁵³

Most interpreters today seek a biblical background for the expression, and this seems to be a more sound approach methodologically. The difficulty, however, lies in the paucity of texts in the LXX of the canonical Old Testament in which **μορφή** appears. There are only four, and **μορφή** translates a different Hebrew word in each text! In each instance, however, **μορφή** refers to, the visible form or appearance (the form of the son of a king, Judges 8:18; "there was no form before my eyes," Job 4:16; an idol in the form of a man, Isaiah 44:13; the form of Nebuchadnezzar's countenance was changed, Dan. 3:19). In the disputed longer ending of Mark the risen Christ appears in another form" (16:12). Since I believe the primary background of the Philippian passage is the Servant Songs of Isaiah, and these songs in a translation from the Hebrew different from that of the LXX, I find it interesting that Aquila uses **μορφή** for **רֵאשִׁית** also in Isaiah 52:14: "So His appearance was marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men;" and again in 53:2: "He has no form or majesty that we should look upon him."

Therefore, I think, contrary to Murray, that meager though the biblical evidence is, it is sufficient to make a *prima facie* case for the reference being to a visible manifestation; but, in agreement with Murray, I do not think the evidence is sufficient to establish that **μορφή**, **εἰκών**, and **δόξα** are simply synonymous. The argument that because **μορφή** translates the Aramaic **מלצ** in Daniel 3:19, it is synonymous with **εἰκών** (image) which translates the Hebrew **מלצ** in Genesis 1:26 -- and therefore Christ being in the form of God equals Adam (and all men)

⁵² Kasemann, p. 61. Kasemann emphasizes the preposition **ἐν** and says that **ἐν μορφῇ** "designates the realm in which one stands and by which one is determined, as in a field of force."

⁵³ F. W. Beare, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Philippians* (New York: Harper, 1959), pp. 79-81; Marshall, p. 126.

being in the image of God — is just too facile. Behm in the *TDNT* article on **μορφή** recognizes that **μορφή** and **εἰκών** cannot be equated,⁵⁴ but I believe it is also well to note that **μορφή** and **δόξα** are not synonyms. Murray's argument against the visible manifestation interpretation of **μορφή** — that no one would substitute **δόξα** for **μορφή** in 7b⁵⁵ ("the glory of a slave") — misses the point that verse 6 refers to Christ's eternal So ja not because [**μορφή** equals **δόξα** but because the **μορφή θεοῦ** is **δόξα**.

Therefore, I believe Calvin was quite correct in pointing us to John 17:5 for the meaning of **ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ** — "and now, glorify thou Me together with thyself, Father, with the glory which I ever had with thee before the world was." Such a description of the eternal Son as in the form of God, sharing God's glory, reminds us of Hebrews 1:3 ("the radiance of His (God's) glory and the exact representation of His nature") and of his title, Logos. As Johannes Weiss wrote: "in the Pauline sense, Christ was from the beginning no other than the *Kabod*, the *Doxa*, of God himself, the glory and radiation of his being, which appears almost as an independent hypostasis of God and yet is connected intimately with God."⁵⁶

Herman Ridderbos writing his outline of Paul's theology at the same time that Martin was producing *Carmen Christi*,⁵⁷ greatly expands an idea that Martin presents as follows: "Adam reflected the glory of the eternal Son of God who, from eternity, is Himself the 'image' of the invisible and ineffable God. . . . What Paul had learned at the feet of Gamaliel about the 'glory' of the first Adam . . . he transferred to the last Adam as He had revealed Himself, to him in a blaze of glory."⁵⁸

While this particular theory of why Paul here refers to Christ as **ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ** raises no doctrinal difficulties — (Ridderbos is insistent that although "Paul has denoted the divine glory of

⁵⁴ J. Behm, " **μορφή**," *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. by Gerhard Kittel, trans. and ed. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley, vol. IV (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1967), p. 752.

⁵⁵ Lecture notes, p. 37.

⁵⁶ Johannes Weiss, *Earliest Christianity*, ed. by F. C. Grant (New York: Peter Smith, 1959), vol. II, p. 478.

⁵⁷ Herman Ridderbos; *Paul: An Outline of His Theology*, trans. by John Richard DeWitt (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1975). Dutch edition, 1966.

⁵⁸ Martin, p. 119.

Christ both in his pre-existence and in his exaltation with a qualification that also held for the first Adam," it is, "of course, in another sense appropriate to the first Adam." "Paul is nowhere engaged in limiting Christ's divine glory, whether in his pre-existence or in his exaltation, with respect to that of God himself. For him Christ's being the Son of God is none other than being God himself." And specifically, we must not be tempted to "the conclusion drawn by some that Paul here represents Christ as the man come from heaven."⁵⁹ — nevertheless, it may be questioned whether Ridderbos does not overstate the evidence when he speaks of the "interchangeableness of *morphe* and *eikon*"⁶⁰ and whether his interpretation of the whole passage in terms of a sustained contrast with Adam is really warranted. With an eye on those we have spoken of who would deny Christ's deity and overlook the fact that, unlike Adam, he already possessed equality with God, Ridderbos himself cautions that "one must not over-draw the parallel."⁶¹ But the question is whether the apostle means to draw the parallel at all here. T. F. Glasson writing in *New Testament Studies* in 1975 concludes that the Adam reference "seems forced at best." No such antithesis with Genesis 3 appears in Philippians 2 because Genesis 3 does not say that "Adam desired equality with God in the comprehensive sense of that expression." "The only kind of godlikeness in question in Genesis 3:5 was obtained, according to 3:22." Glasson cautions us, therefore, not to obtrude the Adam/Christ parallel "into passages where it is not relevant."⁶²

⁵⁹ Ridderbos, pp. 72, 77, and 75.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 74. The fact remains that Adam is nowhere in the LXX or the New Testament referred to as $\mu\omicron\rho\phi\eta\ \theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon$. When Murphy-O'Connor asks why the writer of Phil. 2:6 did not use $\epsilon\acute{\iota}\kappa\omega\nu$, and suggests that $\mu\omicron\rho\phi\eta$ was used to bring out the distinction between Christ and other men (which he sees as the difference between being the image of God in the sense of capacity, all men, and being the image of God in the fullest and most authentic sense, Christ), he seems to destroy his contention that $\epsilon\acute{\iota}\kappa\omega\nu$ and $\mu\omicron\rho\phi\eta$ are simply "interchangeable terms," pp. 41-42.

⁶¹ Ridderbos, p. 75.

⁶² T. Francis Glasson, "Two Notes on the Philippians Hymn (II.6—11)," *New Testament Studies*, 21 (1974—1975), p. 138. Glasson is affirming his agreement with the opinion of Marvin R. Vincent, *The International Critical Commentary on the Epistles to the Philippians and to Philemon* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1911), p. 86. Compare

The increased popularity of the view that sees 6a as speaking of a merely human Jesus has resulted in an increase in the popularity of taking 6b in what has been called the *res rapienda* sense, i.e. that it speaks of Christ refusing to consider equality with God as something to be snatched at, and thus sets forth an implied contrast with the first Adam who did aspire to equality with God. The upsurge in the popularity of that interpretation of 6b is most regrettable. 1) It rests upon an assumed contrast with Adam which is questionable to say the least. 2) It assumes a disjunction between being in the form of God and being equal with God which is contrary to the natural force of the grammatical construction which so closely binds together these two clauses which precede the real disjunction, which comes with the ἀλλὰ at the beginning of verse 7.⁶³ 3) And it ignores the evidence of the use and meaning of ἄρπαγμὸν ἠγείσθαι as an idiomatic proverbial phrase, instead focusing upon the one word, ἄρπαγμός, and its etymology and suggesting what it might possibly mean.

This last error is one which continues to be made by expositors with surprising frequency in spite of what Martin described as the "particularly full and interesting" evidence which Werner Jaeger supplied back in 1915 for the popular, proverbial usage." Jaeger called attention to certain double accusative constructions (which Lightfoot had earlier noted⁶⁵) in which ἄρπαγμα⁶⁶ as well as ἔρμαιοιν (godsend), εὐρημα, (windfall), and εὐτύχημα (a piece of good luck), appear with such verbs as ἠγείσθαι (Phil. 2:6), ποιείσθαι, and τίθεσθαι with the meaning "to regard something as a stroke of luck, a windfall, a piece of good fortune." Jaeger concluded that when used in such a construction ἄρπαγμα was a synonym of the other three nouns mentioned

Furness, p. 181: "The contrast between the arrogance and self-seeking of Adam and the humility and self-emptying of Christ is very striking so long as only the general tenor of Ge 3 and Ph 2:6ff. is considered, but when detailed comparison of the two passages is attempted . . . the parallel is less convincing."

⁶³ Glasson, p. 137; Murray, lecture notes, p. 53.

⁶⁴ Martin, p. 143 ; Werner Wilhelm Jaeger, "Fine stilgeschichtliche Studie zum Philipperbrief," *Hermes*, L (1915), 537-553.

⁶⁵ Lightfoot, p. 137.

⁶⁶ Hoover confirms Jaeger's conclusion that ἀρπαγμα and ἄρπαγμός were used synonymously in the Hellenistic period." Roy W. Hoover, "The Harpagmos Enigma: A Philological Solution," *Harvard Theological Review*, 64 (1971), 107. For a contrary opinion see Moule, p. 267.

above, and so he understood Philippians 2:6 to be saying that Jesus Christ did not regard being in the divine form a windfall, a fortuitous springboard to be used for self-aggrandizement.

Jaeger's interpretation has been taken up by Kasemann, by Martin, by Bauer in his lexicon, by Foerster in the *TDNT*, by Ridderbos, and by several more recent writers. Few, however, seem to have taken note yet of what I consider to be an important Th.D. thesis presented to Harvard in 1968 by Roy W. Hoover and summarized by him in a long article appearing in the *Harvard Theological Review* for January, 1971 with the title, "The *Harpagmos* Enigma: a Philological Solution." Hoover accepts the main lines of Jaeger's argument and adds to the evidence, but he concludes that the meaning conveyed by ἄρπαγμα in such constructions is related to the meanings conveyed by ἔρμαιοιν, εὕρημα, and εὐτύχημα, "not because the nouns are synonymous, but because a stroke of luck is 'something to seize upon.' There is no connotation of fortuitousness in the term ἄρπαγμα." "Obviously," writes Hoover, "a person can regard something other than a stroke of luck as something to seize upon."⁶⁷ Hoover suggests that we translate: "he did not regard being equal with God as something to take advantage of," or, more idiomatically, "as something to use for his own advantage."⁶⁸

It is sometimes objected that such an interpretation is impossible because it would imply that the pre-incarnate Son of God in his divine state was tempted, tempted to use his divine estate for self-aggrandizement, and God cannot be tempted.⁶⁹ I think it well in reply to call attention again to Paul's statement in the closely parallel II Corinthians 8:9 regarding the *grace* of the pre-incarnate Christ "that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor." Philippians 2:6 refers to that same grace. Here is where Ridderbos asks us not to "over-draw the parallel (temptation of Adam — temptation of the pre-existent Christ)." Ridderbos insists that Philippians 2:6 is "a matter of the description of an 'attitude' not of a 'decision' in a temptation situation . . ."⁷⁰ And I would remind us that Paul speaks in

⁶⁷ Hoover, p. 106.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 118.

⁶⁹ See Hammerich, p. 28.

⁷⁰ Ridderbos, p. 75.

verses 6–11 of the experiences of Christ as pre-Incarnate, Incarnate, and Exalted, but they are all experiences of the same *Person* who manifests the same attitude of grace throughout.

Our limited time now forces us to limit ourselves to a quick consideration of the phrase with which verse 7 begins and which has introduced the term *kenosis* into our theological vocabulary: **ἑαυτὸν ἐκένωσεν**. The suggestion first made by Warren in 1911 that the phrase might be a translation of Isaiah 53:12, **נְפִשׁוֹ . . . הִרְחִיב** "he poured out his soul (to death)" has continued to attract support.⁷¹ The LXX rendering is "his soul was delivered (**παραδίδωμι**) to death," but the suggestion is that this is the text in Paul's mind, and he makes or uses a translation which more literally renders the Hebrew.

Jeremias, who has defended this interpretation of 7a in great detail, noting the many "verbal echoes"⁷² of Isaiah 52:13ff. in Philippians 2:6–11, most recently in an article in *Novum Testamentum*,⁷³ says that the phrase refers to the sacrifice of His life.⁷⁴ And H. Wheeler Robinson answers the objection that this would mean that Paul speaks of the Cross *before* the Incarnation, a reversal of the logical order, by saying that the words following **ἐκένωσεν** are parenthetical, the aorists being aorists of antecedent action ("having taken the form of a servant, having come in human likeness, having been found in appearance as a man").⁷⁵ F. E. Vokes has argued that only this interpretation yields a sense which does not do violence to the meaning of **κενόω** nor to the aorist participles which follow.⁷⁶ He cites C. F. D. Moule who says that he has found "in the New Testament no exception to the rule that an aorist participle

⁷¹ For a partial list of those adopting this interpretation consult Talbert, p. 152, and Gibbs, p. 278.

⁷² Zimmerli and Jeremias, p. 97.

⁷³ J. Jeremias, "Zu Phil. 2:7 ἑαυτὸν ἐκένωσεν," *Novum Testamentum*, 6 (1963), 182-188.

⁷⁴ J. Jeremias, "Zur Gedankenführung in den paulinischen Briefen," *Studia Paulina in honorem J. de Zwaan*, ed. by J. W. Sevenster and W. C. van Unnik (Haarlem: Erven F. Bohn, 1953), p. 154, n. 3.

⁷⁵ H. Wheeler Robinson, *The Cross of the Servant* (London: SCM Press, 1926), p. 104, n. 23.

⁷⁶ F. E. Vokes, "Ἀρπαγμός; in Philippians 2,5-11," *Studia Evangelica*, vol. II, ed. by F. L. Cross (Berlin: Akademie, 1964), p. 675.

denotes an action prior to that of the main verb, with the possible exception of two passages in Acts."⁷⁷

The Hebrew verb **פָּרַק** found in Isaiah 53:12 means "to make naked, to pour out, to empty." It is rendered by **ἐκκενῶ** four times in the LXX, in Genesis 24:20 (Rebekkah emptied her jar into the trough), II Chronicles 24:11 (The officers emptied the chest of its money), and twice in Psalm 136 (137 English) :7. Often **פָּרַק** seems to carry the idea of shame as well as emptiness, and L. S. Thornton suggests that only **κενῶ** carried the double meaning in Greek, i.e. voluntary self-giving to the utmost limit and the idea of shameful humiliation.⁷⁸

Certainly the general correspondence of the Philippian passage and the Isaianic Servant Songs seems clear. J. M. Furness asserts that "no great quickness of mind is required to see" this parallel. "There is . . . a startling similarity of theme and treatment: a voluntary humiliation followed by exaltation by God is found in both, and, more importantly, in both cases the exaltation not only follows, but is a result of the humiliation. In both the central figure is a 'servant' and to make the affinity even more convincing, the Philippians passage closes with a direct quotation of Isaiah 45:23."⁷⁹

There have been those who have denied such an Isaianic background to the Philippians passage, most importantly Kasemann, Hooker,⁸⁰ Moule,⁸¹ and Martin, but Marshall represents the prevailing opinion that their opposing arguments are weak.⁸² The primary objection might seem to be that Paul uses **δοῦλος** for servant whereas the LXX uses **παῖς**. (**δοῦλος** does appear in the LXX in chapters 56–66 of Isaiah as well as in 48:20 and 49:3,5, and the verbal form appears in Isaiah 53:11, "to justify the just one who serves many well.") Any appeal to the LXX, however, loses much of its force once it is recognized that the apostle is employing another translation of the Hebrew. Jeremias

⁷⁷ Ibid. See C. F. D. Moule, *An Idiom Book of New Testament Greek*, Second edition (Cambridge: University Press, 1959), p. 100.

⁷⁸ L. S. Thornton, *The Dominion of Christ*. (London: Dacre Press, 1952) pp. 94ff.

⁷⁹ Furness, p. 181.

⁸⁰ Morna D. Hooker, *Jesus and the Servant* (London: S. P. C. K., 1959).

⁸¹ Moule, "Further Reflexions . . .," p. 268.

⁸² Marshall, p. 111.

insists that in the Synoptic Gospels, also, most of the allusions to the Servant Songs call be shown to be based on ancient tradition independent of the LXX and closer to the Hebrew text.⁸³ Aquila (at the beginning of the second century) always uses δοῦλος for Isaiah's Servant and his example was followed by his successors, Theodotion and Symmachus. It has been suggested that both Paul and Aquila may be recalling an older Greek version.⁸⁴ Another suggestion is that the phrase, πᾶς θεοῦ, had come so to indicate a position of dignity and honor that the term δοῦλος, "slave," would more effectively underscore the humiliation of Christ and more eloquently contrast his exaltation as κύριος (verse 11).

Bornkamm objects that the phrases "his soul" and "unto death" in Isaiah 53:12 could hardly have been left untranslated if the apostle were indeed thinking of Isaiah's reference to Christ's self-emptying;⁸⁵ but, of course, they are not left untranslated! The reflexive ἑαυτὸν perfectly captures the force of the Hebrew וְשָׁנַן and the ":unto death" appears as the climax of the humiliation in verse 8.

Martin insists that "it is strange that," if the author really had the Servant of Isaiah in view, "he should have omitted just those features in His humiliation which give to His sufferings their eternal value, viz. His sin-bearing, vicarious work," "for us and for our salvation."⁸⁶ This does not seem nearly so strange, however, if we remember the thrust of Paul's argument here. It seems quite in order that the apostle should speak of what Christ's obedience meant "for Christ" — it meant humiliation, self-emptying, death and then exaltation — since it is his example which Paul wishes to place before the church Paul knows that Christ's ministry was all "for us." It was certainly not a case of Christ using the opportunity (ἄρπαγμός) for self-exaltation. And Paul knows that we benefit from both the death and the exaltation of Christ. But he does not have to spell all that out here because he has a particular point to make. Martin can object

⁸³ Zimmerli and Jeremias, p. 90.

⁸⁴ Furness, p. 181.

⁸⁵ Gunther Bornkamm, "Zum Verständnis des Christus-Hymnus Phil. 2:6-11," *Studies Zu Antike and Urchristentum* (Munich: Chr. Kaiser, 1959), p. 180.

⁸⁶ Martin, pp. 212-213.

as he does only because he refuses to interpret the passage in the context of Paul's exhortation to the Philippians.

That apostolic exhortation continues to be addressed to the Church. It speaks to us with the authority of a divine commandment. In all things our lives are to be patterned after the example of the one whom we confess to be Lord of all, to the glory of God the Father.

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