PHILIPPIANS 2:6-11 — PAUL'S (REVISED) HYMN TO JESUS

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Judging from how frequently Phil 2:6-11 occurs in the liturgical lectionary (every year on New Year's Day and on Passion Sunday, and once every three years on Proper 21) this pericope should be one of the best known and most appreciated passages in the Bible.

However, judging by the amount of scholarly debate it has occasioned, Paul's so-called "Christ Hymn" must be one of the most difficult and provocative sections in the Christian Scriptures.[1]

The questions which have been raised pose a bewildering array of issues: Is it poetic? Is it Pauline? If so, did Paul compose it specifically for this letter? If it is not Pauline, is it a Christian composition?

Is its ideological background the Hebrew Scriptures, Greek philosophy, Hellenistic-Roman religion, a Gnostic redeemer myth, Jewish sophia speculation, apocalyptic, or what?

Can it be scanned poetically, and if so according to the psalm-like parallelism of biblical poems or according to the metrical and rhythmic patterns of Greek poetry?

Did Paul add his own interpolations into the poem? Would its original *Sitz im Leben* have been the church's catechesis or its eucharistic or baptismal worship? Is its theological purpose ethical, Christological, or soteriological?

What is the precise meaning of such terms as μορφή, ἁρπαγμός, κενόω, ὁμοίωμα, σχῆμα, ταπεινόω, ὑπερυψόω, and ἐξομολογέω, to name some of the more conspicuous points of contention?

All these issues have been argued thoroughly. The purpose of this article is not to review those discussions in detail but to try to focus on the issues from a different angle. Much of the scholarly debate has centered on the pre-Pauline (or at least pre-Philippian) form and function of the hymn. (Which acknowledges that most scholars are agreed that the passage is pre-Pauline and that it is poetic, even hymnic.)

The general consensus is that the hymn depicts Christ in successive stages of pre-existence, earthly humiliation, and heavenly exaltation.

This article, however, will reassess the various poetic scansions of Phil 2:6-11 that have been offered to date, offer an alternative reconstruction of the original hymn by giving attention to the typical and non-typical terms which appear in the poem, and suggest an answer to the question of how Paul used the hymn within the rhetorical purpose of his letter to the Philippians.

In other words, Paul adopted a hymn which was current in Christian tradition and which depicted Christ as descending and re-ascending from a heavenly to an earthly and back to a heavenly status.

He adapted that hymn by adding phrases at crucial points so that it could function within his appeal to the Phil-ippian Christians, an appeal that they would treat each other in a spirit of mutual subservience, humbly and obediently.

By refashioning the hymn for that purpose, Paul produced stanzas which picture Christ in his purely human (one might say, in his "authentic" human) condition, stanzas which show that Jesus did not—like the first Adam—succumb to the usual human tempta-tion to be presumptuous.

On the contrary, he made himself subservient, and consequently has been exalted and awarded divine honor and worship.

PREVIOUS POETIC RECONSTRUCTIONS

Ernst Lohmeyer's 1928 investigation was not the first to explore the poetic dimensions of Phil 2:5-11[2]. But he broke new ground by suggesting that one line "even death on a cross" be omitted. Accordingly, he sees the hymn as composed of six strophes with three lines each, a formal analysis which continues to have adherents.

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[1]This article began in 1984 as a project for a graduate seminar on "New Testament Hymns and Creeds" taught by my *Doktorvater* Edgar Krentz at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago; it was updated for presentation at the Upper-Midwest Re-gional Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature held at Luther Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota, in March 1989; and it has been revised again for inclusion in this *Festschrift* (*CurrTM* [1998] 507-517).

[2]E. Lohmeyer, *Kyrios Jesus: Eine Unter-suchung zu Phil. 2,5-11* (2d ed.; Sitzungs-berichte der Heidel-berger Akademie der Wissen-schaften: Philosophisch-historische Klasse 4, 1927-1928; Heidelberg: Carl Winter, Universitätsverlag, 1961).

However, his further conclusions that the hymn is a translation of an Aramaic *Vorlage* and that it originated in the eucharistic liturgy of the primitive Jerusalem church have not been widely accepted.

In 1953 Joachim Jeremias offered a significant modification of Lohmeyer's analysis.[3] Jeremias omits the phrases "even death on a cross," "in heaven and on earth and under the earth" and "to the glory of God the Father" as Paul's glosses, and reconstructs a hymn composed of three strophes with four lines each, each pair of lines being parallel.

He further concludes that each of the strophes, in turn, described Christ's pre-existence, his incarnation, and his exaltation. Furthermore, he identifies Isaiah 53:12 as the background of the "kenosis" phrase "but [he] emptied himself." Thus he equates Jesus with the Isaianic Suffering Servant whose "soul was given over into death."

Consequently Jeremias reaches an unusual conclusion: Christ's "emptying" or "kenosis" refers to his crucifixion, not his incarnation, and the reference to his death is therefore included in the first strophe which ostensibly describes his pre-existence!

In 1965 Johannes Schattenmann attempted to analyze the hymn in two stanzas with nine lines in each stanza[4]. According to his reconstruction, each stanza has exactly 90 syllables! He omits only the article τὸ in v. 9, which would change the English translation of that verse from "God gave him *the* name" to "God gave him *a* name." etc.

Schattenmann's lines, however, seem uneven and artificial. They range in length from 5 syllables to 18 syllables, and average 10 syllables each. This contrasts with lines that average only 4 or 5 syllables each in a hymnic passage in Jesus' so-called High priestly Prayer in John 17:20-23 and in an invocation in a Mithra liturgy.

Furthermore, the verse divisions seem to be divided arbitrarily. So, for example, the longest line, "and gave him a name that is above every name," could easily be divided in two, but another long phrase, "every knee should bend in heaven and on earth and under the earth," is divided into three lines.

Ralph Martin's 1967 study combines features of Lohmeyer's and Jeremias' analyses and remains the most thorough discussion of this passage to date in English[5]. He omits the same phrases as does Jeremias, and like Lohmeyer he puts the remaining lines in pairs, with one pair of lines in each of six strophes.

Regrettably Martin does not clearly equate the stages of Christ's movement with his six strophes. He appears to work with this pattern: Christ's pre-existent choice (st. 1), his incarnation (st. 2), his abasement (st. 3 & 4), his exaltation (st. 5), and his universal homage (st. 6). This would produce a chiastic arrangement spatially and conceptually:

A^1 - Heavenly realm (st. 1)
B^1 - Movement (st. 2)
C^1 - Earthly realm (st. 3)
C^2 - Earthly realm (st. 4)
B^2 - Movement (st. 5)
A^2 - Heavenly realm (st. 6)

In terms of the hymn's ideological background, Martin carefully weighs both the Jewish and Hellenistic influences, but tends to favor the Scriptural antecedents. Furthermore, he would place the original hymn's *Sitz im Leben* within the church's baptismal liturgy.

About the same time Martin was summarizing the heavenly-earthly-heavenly understanding of the hymn Charles Talbert was charting a different course[6]. In his 1967 article he insists that "a proper delineation of *form* leads to a correct interpretation of *meaning*," and then he analyzes the hymn in a series of four strophes of three lines each, omitting only "even death on a cross."

His lines are strikingly unequal and uneven, and it is obviously that Talbert has organized them on the basis of their content rather than on the basis of strictly poetic considerations such as length.

Furthermore, he concludes that the background of the hymn is the story of Adam in Genesis and that

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[3]J. Jeremias, "Zur Gedankenführung in den Paulinischer Briefen," *Studia Paulina: In Honorem Johannis de Zwaan Septuagenarii* (Haarlem: De Erven F. Bohn, 1953) 146-154; this all too brief study was further defined in his "Zu Phil ii 7: ΕΑΥΤΟΝ ΕΚΕΝΩΣΕΝ," *NovT* 6 (1963) 181-188.

[4]J. Schattenmann, *Studien zum neutestament-lichen Prosahymnus* (München: C. H. Beck'sche Verlags-buchhandlung, 1965) 14-17.

[5]R. P. Martin, *Carmen Christi: Philippians 2:5-11 in Recent Interpretation and in the Setting of Early Christian Worship* (2d ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983) 36-38; recently reissued as *Hymn to Christ* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1997). See also R. P. Martin, ed., *Where Christology Began: Essays on Philippians 2* (Atlanta: Westminster John Knox, 1998).

[6]C. H. Talbert, "The Problem of Pre-Existence in Philippians 2:6-11," *JBL* 86 (1967) 141-153.

the first two strophes (that is, the first half of the poem) describe Jesus' earthly career, not his pre-existence. "Parallel structure points to parallel meanings," he argues.

If the second half of the poem unquestionably pictures Jesus' human existence, this implies that the first half likewise is about his earthly life. Unlike Adam who tried to "more than human," Jesus surrendered his life to God and determined to live and die as God's servant.

In his 1968 commentary, Joachim Gnilka treats Phil 2:6-11 under the broad categories of "the humiliation" and "the exaltation" of Christ[7]. Of special interest is his analysis of the pre-Pauline form of the hymn. Like Jeremias and others, he omits "even death on a cross," "in heaven and on earth and under the earth" and "to the glory of God the Father."

Then he treats the opening line "who, though he was in the form of God" as an introductory verse and positions the remainder in five strophes of two lines each. Gnilka concludes that the *religionsgeschichtliche* background is a synthesis of Hellenistic and Jewish motifs, including the Hercules myth., the Danielic Son of Man, the Isaianic Servant of Yahweh, the OT Righteous Man, Wisdom speculation, and the oriental Anthropos myth! Whether the hymn's liturgical setting was baptismal or eucharistic must remain undecided, he says.

Klaus Wengst's 1973 treatment of the hymn as a celebration of "the way of Christ," rather than as a creation-enthronement song or a reconciliation hymn or even an incarnation hymn, is surprising[8].

Equally as surprising is his analysis of the hymn into six strophes of unequal length; the first three strophes have three lines each, the last three have two lines each, omitting only "even death on a cross." Wengst locates the hymn in a Gentile Christian community and feels that Gnostic motifs account for its emphasis on the pre-existence of Christ.

George Strecker's 1974 reevaluation of the evidence concludes that the hymn reflects a combination of Hellenistic and Jewish influences[9]. The first stanza of the hymn is based on Hellenistic religious and philosophical motifs; the second stanza on OT Jewish liturgical formula. Thus the hymn is an example of syncratistic Hellenistic-Jewish early Christian tradition.

Strecker omits the entire section "he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross" in order to produce two stanzas with three couplets each. His reconstruction does not admit of a three-stage Christology because the alleged pre-existence is confined to a single participle (ὑπάρχων) in the opening line.

One must recognize ethical, Christological and soteriological themes in order to appreciate the hymn's entire intended effect, he maintains.

In 1975 Morna Hooker concluded that all previous attempts to reconstruct a pre-Pauline form of the hymn are failures[10]. She holds that the only alternative is to interpret the hymn in its present form, in essence to treat it as a Pauline construct.

Consequently she analyzes the hymn in four strophes, with the first and last having six lines each and the middle two having only four lines each. According to Hooker, the Isaianic Servant of Yahweh motif has influenced the hymn not at the point of Christ's kenosis (where he "emptied himself") but at the point of his obedience (where he "became obedient to the point of death").

Otfried Hofius' 1976 treatment of the Christ hymn is unimpressive in terms of its analysis of the hymn's poetic structure[11]. He maintains that "even death on a cross" is an integral part of the hymn, and so divides it into two strophes of unequal length. The first strophe has eight lines plus one; the second has six lines plus one.

More helpful is Hofius' emphasis on the place of the OT background in understanding the hymn. He seems to be the first to take seriously the fact that Isaiah 45:23 is quoted in the phrases "every knee shall bend" and "every tongue confess."

Just as Deutero-Isaiah together with some of the

[7] J. Gnilka, *Der Philipperbrief* (HTKNT 10/3; Freiburg: Herder, 1968) 111-147.

[8] K. Wengst, *Christologische Formeln und Lieder des Urchristentums* (SNT 7; Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1972) 144-156.

[9] G. Strecker, "Redaktion und Tradition in Christushymnus Phil. 2, 6-11," *ZNW* 55 (1974) 63-78; reprinted in *Eschaton und Historie* (Göttingen:

Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1979) 142-157.

[10] M. D. Hooker, "Philippians 2. 6-11," *Jesus und Paulus: Festschrift für Werner G. Kümmel* (ed. E. E. Ellis and E. Grässer; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1975) 151-164.

[11] O. Hofius, *Der Christushymnus Philipper 2, 6-11: Untersuchungen zu Gestalt und Aussage eines urchristlichen Psalms* (WUNT 17; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck] 1976).

historical psalms praise Yahweh for his saving acts, maintains Hofius, the Christ Hymn in Philippians concludes with praise to God ("to the glory of God the Father") for the salvation effected through Jesus' crucifixion ("even death on a cross").

Charles Robbins, like Hooker and Hofius, tries to analyze the hymn in its Pauline form[12]. His 1980 study concludes that the hymn consists of two sentences; each sentence contains a four-cola unit followed by a two-cola unit. The first sentence speaks of Christ's self-abasement, the second of his glorification by God.

Robbins attempts to show that the hymn is modeled on the pattern of classical Greek epic poetry, that each line or cola is roughly the length of a dactylic hexameter, and that they are grouped in two sentences or periods short enough to be spoken in one breath. It is difficult, however, to convince oneself that these verses in Philippians scan like Attic poetry.

This review of previous reconstructions of the Christ Hymn in Phil 2:6-11 yields several conclusions:

(1) No reconstruction can claim to have been demonstrated successfully or conclusively; all seem to be vulnerable at some point.

(2) Likewise, no analysis of the hymn's ideological background has satisfied even the majority of scholars.

(3) Recent years have seen a tendency to treat the hymn in its Pauline form, without resorting to excising supposed glosses or interpolations.

More importantly (4) the trend has been to downplay the "pre-existence" motif and to interpret the hymn in terms of Christ's earthly history. In fact, during the past two decades a handful of studies, in addition to Talbert's have probed in this direction.

It is interesting to watch the progress of the argument that the Philippian hymn is to be interpreted apart from the doctrinal category of the "pre-existence" of Christ. Those who opt for this alternative argue from a variety of stances.

Thus Norman Bakken, for example, maintains that the hymn does not represent a three-stage Christology patterned after the Sophia Redeemer myth[13]. Rather, its background is Gen 1-3, and it is of a piece with Paul's "first Adam *versus* last Adam" typology outlined in Rom 5 and 1 Cor 15. He concludes that

Phil 2:6-11 reaffirms the flesh-and-blood existence of Jesus of Nazareth, with the result that in his refusal to abandon his truly human function Jesus has become exalted as the hope of all creation.

Similarly John Gibbs argues that the phrase "in the form (μορφῇ) of God" is equivalent to the phrase "let us make *adam* in our image (κατ᾿ εἰκόνα) according to our likeness (καθ᾿ ὁμοίωσιν)" in Gen 1:26[14]. The contrast, then, is between Jesus and Adam, who *did* "snatch" (ἁρπαγμός) after being "like God." Gibbs agrees with Jeremias that the kenosis refers to Jesus' emptying of himself in the crucifixion, not God's emptying of Godself in the incarnation.

Jerome Murphy-O'Connor reaches similar conclusions. However, he finds the background to the hymn not in Genesis but in Wis 2:23 and Isa 44:16[15]. According to him, Wisdom anthropology provides the thematic background which allows one to explain all the otherwise disparate elements in the original Philippian hymn.

Murphy-O'Connor adopts Jeremias' three-part structural analysis, but he interprets the first strophe as a description of Christ as the Righteous Man *par excellence*. As such, Jesus had a right to be treated as if he were a god, but chose to accept the condition of a slave, which involved suffering and death.

As a consequence of his obedience (pictured in the second strophe), he was exalted above all the other Just Ones and given the divine title and authority of Kyrios (according to the third strophe).

George Howard takes the argument one step farther and insists that the entire hymn speak only of the human Christ.

He agrees with Talbert and Murphy-O'Connor. But he also maintains that the second half deals sole with Christ's earthly veneration; it does not refer to his heavenly exaltation. Howard argues that the phrase "God also highly exalted (ὑπερυψόω) him" refers to Christ's earthly post-resurrection exaltation, not to an "ascension into heaven."[16]

He further maintains that the name which God gave Jesus was the name "Yahweh," which he re-

[12]C. J. Robbins, "Rhetorical Structure of Philippians 2:6-11," *CBQ* 42 (1980) 73-82.

[13]N. Bakken, "The New Humanity: Christ and the Modern Age—A Study Centering in the Christ-Hymn: Philippians 2:6-11," *Int* 22 (1968) 71-82.

[14]J. G. Gibbs, "The Relation between Creation and Redemption according to Phil. II 5-11," *NovT* 12 (1970) 270-283.

[15]J. Murphy O'Connor, "Christological Anthropology in Phil. II, 6-11," *RB* 83 (1976) 25-50.

[16]G. Howard, "Phil 2:6-11 and the Human Christ," *CBQ* 40 (1978) 368-387.

ceived not as a new name or title but as a possession to pass on. Accordingly the hymn does not mention any heavenly pre-existence nor any heavenly coronation; it speaks only of Christ's human life of humility and his earthly exaltation to a position of authority in which he was given the name Yahweh to use as an instrument of his power.

The trend to interpret Phil 2:6-11 as though it depicts in its present Pauline form a thoroughly, authentically human Christ has not gone unchallenged, of course, although the evidence and arguments are beyond the purview of this article.[17]

The question remains whether any new light can be shined on the poetic structure of the Christ Hymn, whether the result will picture a heavenly or earthly Jesus, and whether the outcome will impact one's appreciation of Paul's rhetorical argument in Philippians.

RECONSTRUCTING PAUL'S POEM

One of the standard clues for identifying creedal and hymnic passages in the Bible is the presence of vocabulary which is otherwise not characteristic of the document in question. Other clues are an opening relative clause, continued use of participles, metrical patterns, parallel members positioned to form lines and strophes, and an introductory formula.

Although the latter are all apparent in Phil 2:5-11, only the issue of vocabulary will be considered here, for the passage contains numerous terms which are not typical of Paul's writings, including four NT *hapax legomena*.

In the following reproduction of the Nestle-Aland[27] text, the punctuation has been omitted and the nineteen lines have been lettered A through S. For convenience throughout the remainder of the article the lines of the hymn will be referred to by these letters, rather than by the standard verse numbers.

Words which are not typical Pauline terms, according to the ensuing discussion, are underscored; those which *are* characteristic of Paul's vocabulary are printed in shaded type.

A - ὃς ἐν <u>μορφῇ</u> θεοῦ <u>ὑπάρχων</u>
B - οὐχ <u>ἁρπαγμὸν</u> ἡγήσατο

[17]Cf. H. Binder, "Erwägunzen zu Phil 2 6-7b," *ZNW* 78 (1987) 230-243; C. A. Wanamaker, "Philippians 2.6-11: Son of God or Adamic Christ-ology?" *NTS* 33 (1987) 179-193; N. T. Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991) 56-98.

C - τὸ εἶναι <u>ἴσα</u> θεῷ
D - <u>ἀλλὰ</u> <u>ἑαυτὸν</u> <u>ἐκένωσεν</u>
E - <u>μορφὴν</u> <u>δούλου</u> λαβών
F - ἐν ὁμοιώματι ἀνθρώπων γενόμενος
G - καὶ <u>σχήματι</u> εὑρεθεὶς ὡς ἄνθρωπος
H - <u>ἐταπείνωσεν</u> ἑαυτὸν
I - γενόμενος ὑπήκοος μέχρι θανάτου
J - θανάτου δὲ σταυροῦ

K - διὸ καὶ ὁ θεὸς αὐτὸν <u>ὑπερύψωσεν</u>
L - καὶ ἐχαρίσατο αὐτῷ τὸ ὄνομα
M - τὸ ὑπὲρ πᾶν ὄνομα
N - ἵνα ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι Ἰησοῦ
O - πᾶν <u>γόνυ κάμψῃ</u>
P - <u>ἐπουρανίων καὶ ἐπιγείων καὶ καταχθονίων</u>
Q - καὶ πᾶσα <u>γλῶσσα ἐξομολογήσηται</u>
R - ὅτι κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς
S - εἰς δόξαν θεοῦ πατρός

The first five lines contain *hapax*. Μορφή in lines A & E and ἁρπαγμός in line B occur nowhere else in the NT. Furthermore, ἴσος in line C is not found elsewhere in Paul. While κενόω and δοῦλος in lines D & E are found elsewhere in Paul's writings, only here are they applied to Christ. Elsewhere what is "emptied" is the cross (1 Cor 1:17) or one's boasting (2 Cor 9:30) or the promise (Rom 4:14), and "slave" is a title for Paul and his companions (e.g. Phil 1:1), not a title for Christ. Similarly, σχῆμα in line G occurs elsewhere in Paul only at 1 Cor l7:31, where it refers to the "shape" of the world, not to Christ.

In contrast to these six lines which contain non-Pauline terms and terms used in a non-Pauline fashion, lines F, H, I & J contain typically Pauline vocabulary. Thus ὁμοίωμα in line F, ἄνθρωπος in lines F& G, θάνατος in lines I & J, and σταυρός in line J are found frequently in Paul's writings.

The same can be said for ταπεινόω in line H and ὑπήκοος in line I. In their case, however, it is unusual for Paul to describe Christ as the one who is "humble" and "obedient"; normally these are attributes of Chris-tians.

The conjunctive phrase διὸ καὶ in line K marks the turning point in the hymn. The second half also contains a mixture of Pauline and non-Pauline terms.

Thus ὑπερυψόω in line K is another NT *hapax legomenon*. Of the three chief terms in line P the first two, ἐπουράνιος and ἐπίγειος, are used elsewhere by Paul. But the third term, καταχθόνιος is the final *hapax* in the hymn. This suggests that the three-member phrase in its entirety is not Pauline.

The phrases γόνυ κάμψῃ in line O and γλῶσσα

ἐξομολογήσηται in line Q both occur elsewhere in Paul, but only in OT quotations. The former is found in Rom 11:4 & 14:11, which quote 1 Kings 19:18 and Is 45:23; the latter is found in Rom 14:11 & 15:19, which quote Is 45:23 and Ps 17:50.

(In 1 Cor 12-14 Paul does use the plural γλῶσσαι to refer to "speaking in tongues.") The implications are twofold: first, that γόνυ κάμψῃ and γλῶσσα ἐξομολογήσηται are not Pauline terms; second, that the hymn at this point has been influenced by Is 45:23.

On the other hand, χαρίζομαι in line L and ὄνομα in lines L, M & N are typically Pauline, as are κύριος in line R and δόξα and πατήρ in line S.

To summarize, in the first half of the hymn lines A through E and G are marked by non-Pauline terms, as are lines K, O, P, and Q in the second half. With only minor adjustments, these can be pieced together to form a pair of stanzas which are complete and understandable on their own terms.

The remaining lines, with two exceptions, can be interpreted as Paul's additions to the hymn. The two exceptions are lines N & R, which must be included with the original hymn for it to make sense.

The result would be a hymn of two strophes with six lines each. The first strophe is a description of Christ's self-humiliation, and the second a description of his exaltation by God.

Unlike many previous poetic analyses, this reconstruction has two advantages: it is based on some objective criterion, namely the occurrence of Pauline and non-Pauline vocabulary, and it results in a symmetrical pair of stanzas with roughly equal lines. The following overly-literal translation excludes the putative Pauline interpolations.

A - Existing in the form of God
B - he did not regard it a prize
C - to be equal with God;
D - rather, he emptied himself
E - taking the form of a slave
G - and was found in shape as a human.

K - Therefore God also hyper-exalted him
N - that at the name of Jesus
O - every knee should bow,
P - of the supernals and the terrestrials and
    the subterraneans
Q - and every tongue should acknowledge,
R - "Lord Jesus Christ!"

This reconstruction of the pre-Pauline hymn has much in common with those interpretations which find a "Gnostic redeemer myth" behind it[18]. Such interpretations hold that the myth, as adapted to Jesus, dramatized the Redeemer as a "heavenly being" who came down to earth and was obedient to God's mission and who was therefore exalted precisely because of that act of free will.

The descending and ascending Redeemer stands in contrast with other semi-divine figures who were not obedient to "the High God," dissidents who left heaven and descended to the earth in order to lead people astray. Such, for example, were the fallen angels described in 1 Enoch 64:

> Then I [i.e. Enoch] saw in that place other mysterious faces. And I heard the voice of an angel saying, "These are the angels who descended upon the earth and revealed what was hidden to the children of the people, and led the people astray to commit sin."[19]

However, when Phil 2:6-11 is read with Paul's adaptations inserted (in italics below), two things happen: first, the hymn loses its symmetry, although it remains poetic in tone; second, its "pre-existence" motif largely disappears under the weight of Christ's truly human characteristics.

A - Existing in the form of God
B - he did not regard it a prize
C - to be equal with God;
D - rather, he emptied himself
E - taking the form of a slave.
F - *Being in the likeness of humans*
G - and found in shape as a human,
H - *he humiliated himself,*
I - *being obedient unto death,*
J - *death on a cross.*

K - Therefore God also hyper-exalted him
L - *and granted him the name,*
M - *the one above every name,*
N - that at the name of Jesus

[18]E.g. E. Käsemann, "Kritische Analyse von Phil. 2, 5-11," *Exegetische Versuche und Besinnungen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1960) 1:51-95; orig. Pub. *ZthK* 47 (1950) 313-360; J. A. Sanders, "Dissenting Deities and Philippians 2 1-11," *JBL* 88 (1969) 279-290.

[19]"1 (Ethiopic Apocalypse of) Enoch," trans. E. Isaac, in *The Old Testament Pseudepig-rapha*, vol. 1, *Apocalyptic Literature and Testa-ments*, ed. J. H. Charlesworth (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983) 44.

O - every knee should bow,
P - of the supernals and the terrestrials and
  the subterraneans
Q - and every tongue should acknowledge,
R - "Lord Jesus Christ!"
S - *to the glory of God the Father*.

Accordingly, those analyses which emphasize the true humanity of Jesus in the first half of the hymn and which interpret it against the background of Genesis 1-3 seem closest to the mark, at least insofar as Paul's adaptation of the hymn functions in this letter.

Although the pre-Pauline version may have pictured a divine man who descended to the earthly realms, suffered crucifixion, and was then subsequently exalted to the heavens, the final Pauline version starts not with a pre-existent Christ but with an earthly Jesus.

This Jesus, like Adam before him, did exist in the form or likeness of God, but unlike Adam he did not try to be more than human and grasp at divinity. Instead he was content to remain in his human shape and likeness, and submitted totally to the human condition, embracing death itself, even the worst form of death by crucifixion. Consequently God has now exalted him to the point where all peoples and powers— whether chthonic, earthly or heavenly—do obeisance to his name and honor his lordship.

RHETORIC WHICH
PROMOTES FRIENDSHIP

One of the most promising developments of Philippian scholarship in recent years has been the trend to view this epistle as an example of a letter of friendship.[20] According to this view, Paul followed the conventions of the Greco-Roman world when he sent a hortatory letter of friendship to his supporters at Philippi.

In the ancient world this sort of friendship (φιλία) was not so much an emotional bond as it was a kind of calculated reciprocity between individuals, whether related as equals or as patrons and clients.

Several thematics in Philippians correspond to conventional φιλία. To some extent the actual sending of this letter substitutes for the requirement that friends spend time together, and Paul's desire that he himself (Phil 1:8 & 26) visit the Philippians, as well as his companions Timothy (2:19-24) and Epaphroditus (2:25-30, 3:18), cements their friendship.

The assertion that Paul and the Philippians share a common struggle against enemies (1:15-18, 27-30; 2:14-15; 3:2, 18-19) is another aspect of their friendship. And the fact that the Philippians sent the apostle financial support during his imprisonment (4:15-18) is ample evidence of their relationship as friends.

Specific terminology also supports the φιλία motif. First is the term (συγ)κοινωνία, which denotes partnership or fellowship or reciprocal shar-ing. Thus in five instances Paul refers to their mutual partnership in the gospel (1:5) and in the Spirit (2:1), to his own sharing in Christ's sufferings (3:10) and to the Philippians' sharing in his distress (4:14), and of course to their financial support (4:15).

Second is the term πολίτευμα/πολιτεύομαι, signifying citizenship or living one's life as a responsible citizen, in other words, letting the virtue of friendship play out in the formation of an ideal society. Although the term appears only twice in Philippians, its conceptual importance is clear from the fact that Paul initially uses this otherwise unusual term when he enjoins his readers to "live your life" in a worthy manner (1:27) and ultimately when he urges them to imitate himself because "our citizenship [or commonwealth] is in heaven" (3:20).

Third is the term φρονέω, especially in the phrase τὸ αὐτὸ φρονεῖν, meaning to be in friendly agreement by thinking the same way. Paul uses the expression ten times, to refer to how he thinks about the Philippians (1:7), how they think about each other (2:2), and how they think about him (4:10).

The term indicates in general how mature people think about each other (3:15) and how Christ's ene-

[20]L. M. White, "Morality Between two Worlds: A Paradigm of Friendship in Philip-pians," *Greeks, Romans, and Christians: Essays in Honor of Abraham J. Malherbe* (ed. D. L. Balch, E. Ferguson, W. A. Meeks; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990) 201-215; W. A. Meeks, "The Man from Heaven in Paul's Letter to the Philip-pians," *The Future of Early Christianity: Essays in Honor of Helmut Koester* (ed. B. A. Pearson; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991) 329-336; S. K. Stowers, "Friends and Enemies in the Politics of Heaven: Reading Theology in Philippians," *Pauline Theology* (ed. J. M. Bassler; Minneapolis: Fort-ress, 1991) 1. 105-121; B. Withering-ton, *Friend-ship and Finances in Philippi: The Letter of Paul to the Philippians* (NT in Context; Valley Forge, PA: Trinity, 1994); T. Engberg-Pedersen, "Stoicism in Philippians," *Paul in His Hellenistic Context* (Minneapo-lis: Fortress, 1995) 256-290; N. A. Dahl, "Euodia and Syntyche and Paul's Letter to the Philippians," *The Social World of the First Christians: Essays in Honor of Wayne A. Meeks* (ed. L. M. White and O. L. Yarbrough; Minnea-polis: Fortress, 1995) 3-15.

mies think about earthly things (3:19), and more specifically how Euodia and Syntyche are to agree in their thinking (4:2). Most importantly, φρονεῖν is the term that conceptualizes how the Philippians are to be like Christ Jesus (2:5), whose example is then recounted in the hymn.

When extracted from its setting, Phil 2:6-11 is clearly Christological in nature, depicting Jesus either in its pre-Pauline form as a descending and re-ascending heavenly being, or with its Pauline additions as truly human and therefore divinely exalted.

But within the context of the letter itself, it functions as the basis for the apostle's hortatory appeal that his auditors treat each other with an attitude of mutual subservience. In the verses immediately preceding (2:1-4) and following (2:12-13) Paul focuses on the need for the Philippians to practice humility (ταπεινοφοσύνη, 2:3) and obedience (ὑποκοή, 2:12). But these are precisely the virtues which he introduced into the middle of the Christ hymn in lines H & J!

In other words, Paul seized on the first half of the hymn, which stressed Christ's self-abnegation, and added those references which stress Christ's identification with humanity (line F) and which emphasize his humiliation and death by crucifixion (lines H, I & J).

Similarly, in the second half of the hymn, in order to avoid the impression that what Christ did he did for his own benefit and glory, Paul stresses that Jesus' exalted name *was given him* by God (lines l-M) and that his universal worship redounds to *God's* glory (line S).

The result is a striking rhetorical strategy. By grounding his ethical appeal in such a hymnic depiction, the apostle enables his auditors to imagine a truly human Jesus who was content to embrace that status, to renounce the temptation to try and become divine, and on the contrary to submit to the servile humilia-tion of an ignominious execution. The divine reward, then, is that his reputation has been exalted throughout the universe and his dominion acknowledged by all.

In this way the Philippians—together with all who audit Paul's letter—are moved to imitate Jesus' style and thereby defer to each other within the pattern of genuine friendship.