

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY
LIBERTY BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

EXEGESIS OF PHILIPPIANS 2:5-11

A PAPER

SUBMITTED TO PROFESSOR ANTHONY C. THORNHILL

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT

OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE COURSE

GREEK LANGUAGE TOOLS

NGRK 506-B06

BY

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VENICE, FLORIDA

MARCH 6, 2012

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

1 Cor.	1 st Corinthians
1 Jn.	1 st John
BDAG	A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature
Col.	Colossians
Eph.	Ephesians
ESV	English Standard Version
Gal.	Galatians
Heb.	Hebrews
Isa.	Isaiah
Jn.	John
KJV	King James Version
Lexham	Lexham English Bible
Lk.	Luke
Locations	Kindle Locations (<i>in lieu of page numbers when Kindle digital books are cited</i>)
LXX	Greek Septuagint
Matt.	Matthew
NASB	New American Standard Bible Update (1995)
NET	New English Translation
NIV	New International Version (1984)
NIV (2011)	New International Version (2011)
NKJV	New King James Version
Phil.	Philippians
Rom.	Romans

INTRODUCTION

For nearly two thousand years, the text of Philippians 2:6-11, better known as the “Carmen Christi,” has served as one of the pinnacle texts regarding the absolute Deity and eternity of the Lord Jesus Christ. Most likely an ancient hymn of the infant church, the Carmen Christi serves as a six verse summation of the Lord’s existence, attitude and redemptive work which reaches back before creation, through the incarnation and into eternity. Its message, largely uncontested until the last two hundred years,¹ places the Son of God as the ultimate teaching example for all who claim union with Him. Here, the veil of eternity past is stripped away to demonstrate unparalleled love and humility, with the Divine Son being made like man to redeem men.²

The purpose of this essay will be to establish the full meaning of the nature of Christ in His pre-incarnate, incarnate and post-incarnate states, in relation to His absolute Deity as the eternal second member of the Triune Godhead. Christ, having eternally existed as the Divine Son, possessed all of the rights and privileges of YHWH, only to surrender those rights for the redemption of the elect. Here, the eternal Son, in the ultimate act of humility, left His exalted position of glory, to die a death in the place sinners; even a cross death. Because of this humility and obedience, the Father exalted the Son, now incarnate, back to His rightful position of honor and vindicated His name, to His own glory. In short, the author will attempt to demonstrate that

¹ “The first serious challenge to its authenticity was made in the 1840s by F. C. Baur of Tübingen.” Frederick F. Bruce, *Philippians*, (Baker Book Group. Kindle Edition), Locations 527-528.

² It is the demonstration of this humility that will be the key point in Paul’s argument. The Son, though fully God and equal to God, forfeits His divine privileges to enter into human likeness. This interpretation of Paul’s teaching point brings coherence to the text. It is not an act of humility if a mere creature denies striving for equality with God. But, the one who forfeits equality for the sake of others serves as a perfect example of Paul’s lesson. **Also, the exegesis of this passage will consist of Phil. 2:5-11, with verse 5 added for the sake of context.**

the Son of God is a fully Divine person, separate from the Father in personhood, but united in being, who has eternally held ontological equality with God, being Himself, fully God.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Epistle to the Philippians, “was certainly written by Paul of Tarsus to a Christian church in the city of Philippi, province of Macedonia,”³ states Moises Silva. The church in Philippi, according to Silva, “had been founded by Paul himself in the early 50’s of the first century (Acts 16).”⁴ Silva gives a broad date of “the late 50’s or early 60’s”⁵ regarding the penning of this prison Epistle. F.F. Bruce tentatively dates the Epistle “in early A.D. 60,”⁶ depending on Paul’s location at the time of its penning, which was most likely Rome. Internal evidence suggests Rome as the location of authorship on account of Paul’s imprisonment, under the watchful eye of the “praetorian guard” (Phil. 1:13), and, the pending judgment of his trial, thus suggesting an imminent verdict (Phil. 1:12-30). Nevertheless, these internal evidences are by no means conclusive; hence, Silva’s broad suggestion seems most reasonable.

The theme of Paul’s letter to the church in Philippi is one of unity and humility. Paul, throughout the discourse suggests that the Philippians have “one mind” (1:27), the “same mind” (2:2) and “humility of mind regarding one another” (2:3).⁷ As a result, the peace of God would

³ Moises Silva, *Philippians: Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament*, 2nd, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 1.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Bruce, Locations 603-605.

⁷ Being like-minded . . . being one in . . . purpose: Gk. hina to auto phronēte . . . the verb phronein . . . (which accounts for ten out of its twenty-three Pauline occurrences). It means “to think” in the sense of having a settled opinion or attitude, having one’s mind set in a particular way. Bruce, Locations 1621-1624.

guard the “hearts and minds” of the congregation “in Christ Jesus” (4:7). Moreover, “Paul himself also wanted to encourage the Philippians in their faith”⁸ and used his imprisonment as an exhortation to the Philippians to live an emboldened Christian life, all to the proliferation of the gospel.

Of special interest in this essay is the historical background of Philippians 2:6-11, better known as the “Carmen Christi.”⁹ Cast in rhythmical prose, “Like many other early Christian hymns,”¹⁰ the “Christ Hymn” consists “of a recital of the saving work of God in Christ, in self-humiliation followed by exaltation.”¹¹ In short, the “Carmen Christi” describes the finished work of the Lord Jesus and His forfeited position of glory in eternity past, for the redemption of a people in Himself, followed by vindication and exaltation by the Father due to His perfect obedience and humility.¹² Encompassed in the use of this ancient hymn is the teaching point of Paul that the church at Philippi should have humility in mind and spirit. Paul’s point throughout the discourse is in regards to the divine privileges that the Son forfeited willingly for the sake of others. Hence, the Christians in Philippi, following the example of the eternal Son, should do the same regarding their earthly privileges.

EXEGESIS AND COMMENTARY OF PHILIPPIANS 2:5-11

⁸ ESV Study Bible, (Good News Publishers, Crossway Books. Kindle Edition), Location 236335.

⁹Speaking of the origin of the “Carmen Christi,” F.F. Bruce states; “Whether it was Paul’s own composition or someone else’s, Paul incorporates it into his present argument in order to reinforce his plea for the cultivation of a humble spirit.” Bruce, Locations 1672-1673.

¹⁰ Bruce, Location 1669.

¹¹ Ibid., 1670.

¹² In recognition that the text of Phil. 2:6-11 is most likely an ancient hymn of the infant church, it must be added that the author of this essay will proceed throughout this essay with the view that the text of 2:6-11 is of genuine Pauline authorship. The reason for this distinction is for the sole purpose of the grammatical content of the text itself, in relation to the author’s thesis. In short, it is not the intent of the author to attempt to confirm the historic origin of verses 6-11, but rather, to exegete their meaning in light of the absolute divinity of Christ.

Block Diagram

Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus,
who, though he was in the *form* of God,
did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,
but made himself nothing,
1) taking the *form* of a servant,
2) being born in the likeness of men.
And being found in human form,
he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death,
even death on a cross.
Therefore God has highly exalted him
and bestowed on him the name that is above every name,
so that at the name of Jesus *every knee should bow*,
1) in heaven
2) and on earth
3) and under the earth,
and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is *Lord*,
to the glory of God the Father.¹³

Exegesis of Philippians 2:5-11

Philippians 2:5

In verse 5 of Philippians 2, the apostle begins his discourse regarding the nature of true humility when he states; “Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus” (NASB). Here the apostle exhorts his readers to “Have this attitude” in themselves. Paul seemingly has in mind much more than outward actions in this statement. Rather, the apostle is relaying to the reader the inward disposition that should accompany one’s salvific union to the Logos. The Greek word “attitude” (φρονεῖτε > *phroneite*) used in verse 5, literally, “to think,” carries with it a variety of meanings, but, contextually refers to one’s thought process on a

¹³ Unless otherwise noted; "Scripture quotations taken from the New American Standard Bible®, Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation, Used by permission." (www.Lockman.org)

certain matter. The BDAG states of this word; “to develop an attitude based on careful thought, be minded/disposed.”¹⁴ So important was this idea to the apostle that he used this word an additional two times in chapter 3 regarding Christian perseverance.¹⁵ Here, the apostle exhorts his readers to embrace the prize of “the upward call of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 3:14, NASB). Thus, Paul creates a running theme throughout the Epistle regarding one’s attitude.

The “attitude” that Paul desires for his readers is much more than a simple, cognitive recognition of brute facts. Rather, the context of the Epistle describes this “attitude” *as coupled with* an inward moving of one’s “spirit” towards Godly things. This point is noted with Paul’s repeated use of ψυχή (psuche, Phil. 1:27, 2:2, 2:3, 3:4, 3:19, 4:7) throughout the Epistle. This term carries a general meaning of “life” or “soul” and contextually bears the meaning of “feeling and emotions.”¹⁶ Translated, “one mind” or “same mind” by the NASB, ESV, NET, NKJV and KJV, the text indicates that the apostle is exhorting his readers not only to have a cognitive understanding or “attitude” in 2:5, but also, they are to demonstrate a volitional, inward disposition towards Godly things as well. Hence, the “attitude” that Paul is exhorting for his readers in 2:5 addresses the entire Christian character, with the focus of this attitude as none other than the Lord Jesus Christ. In short, Paul is telling his readers in Philippi that they are to emulate the now exalted Son; a theme that runs throughout the New Testament.¹⁷

Philippians 2:6

¹⁴ W. Arndt, F.W. Danker, W. Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd, (Chicago: IL, University of Chicago Press, 2000), 1066. (Cited hereafter “BDAG”)

¹⁵ “Let us therefore, as many as are perfect, have this attitude; and if in anything you have a different attitude, God will reveal that also to you.” Phil. 3:15, NASB.

¹⁶ BDAG, 1099.

¹⁷ C.f. Rom. 6:4, 8:4, Gal. 5:16, 25, Eph. 4:1, Col. 2:6, 1 Jn. 1:6, 2:6.

Verse 6, which begins with a “relative clause” proclaims; “who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped” (NASB). Paul begins verse 6 via a discussion of the Son’s “existence,” though it is better contextually to view Paul’s words as “preexistence.” The apostle uses the word ὑπάρχων (*huparchwn*)¹⁸ to speak about the “eternality” of the Divine Son;¹⁹ a present active participle denoting, “to be in a state or circumstance.”²⁰ James R. White explains; “The first phrase of verse 6 sets the tone for the theological discussion to follow. Paul says that Christ was ‘existing’ (*huparchon*) in the ‘form of God’ . . . The participle is again ‘timeless’ in that it does not point to any moment when Jesus ‘started’ to exist . . . Christ has always been in the form of God.”²¹ Interestingly, the use of “timeless” terms in reference to Christ’s “being” is not unique to the Epistle to the Philippians and is not limited to Pauline authorship. Rather, in the Fourth Gospel, the apostle John uses ἦν (*en*), the imperfect form of the verb εἰμί (*eimi*) to denote Jesus’ timeless existence.²²

This “*huparchon*” or “state of being” is related to the Son’s preexistence in the “form” (*μορφήν* > *morphe*) of God via verse 6. *μορφήν* (*morphe*), which generally means “form, outward appearance, shape,”²³ in this context carries with it a much more specific meaning of

¹⁸ *huparchwn*, “to be,” or “to exist” BDAG, 1029.

¹⁹ “The phrase *ὃς ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ ὑπάρχων* ‘who, existing in the form of God’ is translated ‘he always had the nature of God’ [TEV]. This verb means to be originally, to be by nature, to be from eternity, implying Christ’s pre-existence; his eternal existence is also implied in the context. The present tense indicates that this was a continuing condition both in his preincarnate existence and his existence afterward.” J. Harold Greenlee, *An Exegetical Summary of Philippians*, (Dallas, TX. Summer Institute of Linguistics, 1992), Phil. 2:6.

²⁰ BDAG, 1029.

²¹ James R. White. “The Pre-existence of Christ in Scripture, Patristics and Creed.” *Alpha and Omega Ministries*. http://vintage.aomin.org/The_Pre_Existence_of_Christ.html (accessed Feb. 11, 2012).

²² John’s use of ἦν in John 1:1 is contrasted with his use of the temporal ἐγένετο in 1:14 of the same Gospel. A.T. Robertson explains; “This Greek tense shows continuous existence, not origin. This is not ‘became’ for the incarnation of the Logos (John 1:14).” Archibald T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, (B&H Publishing Group), Locations 4500-4501.

²³ BDAG, 659.

“substance” or “nature” (οὐσία > ousia)²⁴ in verses 6-7, according to many evangelical scholars. Dennis W. Jowers explains;

The interpretation of μορφῆ in Phil 2:6–7 as equivalent, in meaning or at least in reference, to οὐσία commands widespread allegiance among evangelical scholars as well. F. F. Bruce, for instance, follows Lightfoot in holding that “the noun *morphe* ‘implies not the external accidents but the essential attributes.’” Leon Morris, likewise, believes that, by describing Christ as ἐν μορφῆ θεοῦ, Paul unambiguously ascribes deity to him. “It is not easy,” writes Morris, “to see ‘being in the form of God’ as meaning anything less.” I. H. Marshall, similarly, affirms that in Phil 2:6–7 “there is described the way in which a being who had the nature of God renounced the privileges of that state and took on the form of a human servant of God.” David J. MacLeod contends that μορφῆ in Phil 2:6–7 “refers to nature or essence.” In the view of Gerald Hawthorne, verse 6a indicates that “Christ was God, possessed of the very nature of God.” Gordon Fee identifies the phrases ἐν μορφῆ θεοῦ and ἴσα θεῷ as “among the strongest expressions of Christ’s deity in the NT”; and Richard Melick declares that “the NIV correctly translates ‘in the form of God’ as ‘in very nature God.’”²⁵

What this understanding implies is that the eternal Son, in His preexistence, was in very nature θεὸς (theos) in both substance and title. Jesus, being in the form of God, implies that His ὑποστάσεως (hupostasews, Heb. 1:3) is fully divine, a claim that cannot be made by any mere creature.²⁶ Also in view in verse 6 is the existence of two Divine persons. The personal pronoun “who” (ὃς > hos) grammatically refers back to the subject of the discourse as found in verse 5, “Christ Jesus.” However, a second person is also included in verse 6, “God” (θεῷ > “thew”),

²⁴ Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 1, (Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 2005), 514. “The word μορφῆ may mean either the mode of manifestation, that which appears, as when it is said ‘the king of heaven appeared on earth ἐν μορφῆ ἀνθρώπου;’ or the nature or essence (φύσις or οὐσία) itself. The latter view is adopted by most of the fathers. The former, however, is more in accordance with the common usage of the word, and with the immediate context.”

²⁵ Dennis W. Jowers, “The Meaning of Morphe in Philippians 2:6-7,” (*JETS* 49, no. 4, December 2006), 763.

²⁶ Interestingly, Gen. 1:26 in the LXX uses the word εἰκών regarding mankind being created in the image of God. εἰκών, “an object shaped to resemble the form or appearance of something” (BDAG, 282) always carries with it temporal existence, unlike Paul’s use of μορφῆ in 2:6 regarding Christ’s preexistence.

who is later identified as the Father in verse 11.²⁷ Interestingly, Paul’s identification of two “persons” is used in a manner of both contrast and unity, with the individual personhood of both the Father and Son clearly related to the reader within the text, and, an equally clear proclamation of the harmony of these two persons in regards to their attributes and divinity. The implications of Paul’s identification of two Divine persons are profound and become clear throughout the discourse. The Son, who is separate from the Father in personhood, nevertheless possesses the Divine name of YHWH in both title and substance, with the Son holding an ontological equality with the Father.

Along with the Divine μορφῆ (morphe) that Jesus possessed, the apostle Paul further explains the “equality” (ἴσα > isa) that Jesus possessed in His pre-incarnation. Before proceeding any further, it is vital to recall the context in which the apostle is framing his argument. Paul has repeatedly called for his readers to be of “one mind” and has exhorted them to place the needs of others above their own. Beginning in verse 5 of chapter 2, the apostle uses the example of Christ as the ultimate illustration of humility. In the first clause of verse 6, Paul explains that Jesus is fully God, having held the μορφῆ (morphe) of God in preexistence. And now, Paul proceeds further and explains that Jesus, being fully God, did not count the “equality” (ἴσα > isa) that He held as the second member of the Trinity, as something to be retained or held onto. The term ἴσα (isa) generally implies; “being equivalent in number, size, quality, *equal*.”²⁸ Its specific application in Phil. 2:6 means to “be equal with someone.”²⁹ James Montgomery Boice makes this profound statement about Paul’s use of the word ἴσα (isa); “Paul’s use of this word in

²⁷ θεῶν, a dative, singular noun; c.f. John 1:1-2, 1:18.

²⁸ BDAG, 480.

²⁹ Ibid.

reference to Jesus teaches that Jesus is equal to God.”³⁰ Boice’s comment is quite revealing when one considers the accusative noun, “grasped,” in relation to the “equality” (ἴσα) previously mentioned. The “grasping” (ἄρπαγμὸν > harpagmon) according to the verse can mean “violent seizure or robbery”³¹ (“robbery,” KJV, NKJV), but, is contextually inappropriate. Rather, ἄρπαγμὸν (harpagmon) in this context is more likely referring to “grasping” or “something claimed.”³² If correct, the image being relayed to the reader is of the Son’s full equality (“being in the form of God”) and His *willing* forfeiture of that equality.

The NASB, ESV, Lexham, NET and NIV (1984) all translate the second clause of 2:6 similar to; “did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped” (NASB).³³ However, the NIV (2011) seemingly has captured the fuller English “idea” when it states that the pre-incarnate Son; “did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage” (NIV, 2011).³⁴ This rendering fits well contextually with Paul’s illustration of humility and brings out the force of Paul’s use of *morphe* a bit further. The eternal Son, while holding the “form” of God, did not “count” or “regard” (ἡγέομαι > hegeomai) His equality as something to be held onto to for his own advantage, gain or comfort. F.F. Bruce explains; “A powerful argument for maintaining the active force proper to harpagmos is presented by C. F. D. Moule . . . The point of the passage is

³⁰ James Boice, *Foundations of the Christian Faith*, (Downers Grove, IL: Inter Varsity Press, 1986), 269.

³¹ BDAG, 133.

³² Ibid.

³³ Phil. 2:6b, NASB.

³⁴ NIV 2011. It is helpful to note that the apostle, in using what is most likely an ancient hymn of the infant church, is not suggesting, as some claim, that Jesus simply did not attempt to gain or that He did not strive for equality with God; much in the manner of Satan’s desire of equality with God. This interpretation simply does not address the question of humility that Paul is calling for in verses 1-11. If this was indeed the case, than any creature that did not attempt equality with God would serve equally well as Paul’s example (e.g. Michael, Gabriel). Instead, Paul’s point is that Jesus held equality with God in eternity past and forfeited that equality. In John 17:5, Jesus alludes to the glory and equality He held pre-incarnation when He proclaims; “And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed” (NASB).

that, instead of imagining that equality with God meant getting, Jesus, on the contrary, gave—gave until he was ‘empty’ . . . he thought of equality with God not as plērōsis but as kenōsis, not as harpagmos but as open-handed spending—even to death.”³⁵

In reference to the apostle’s use of ἡγεομαι (hegeomai) it is vital to note that the Son, per Paul’s teaching topic, willingly displayed the greatest act of humility. Thus, there is a correspondence between the actions of Christ in verse 6 (“did not consider”) and the apostles exhortation to the Philippians in the preceding context; “Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others” (Phil. 2:4, NASB). Paul’s point is that the Lord Jesus, having held all of the privileges of God, willingly laid them aside for the sake of others; hence, the Philippians should as well, regarding their earthly privileges. J.H. Greenlee explains; “He was willing to relinquish that existence of equality with God in order to come to earth as a human being . . . he did not regard his equality with God as something which he should hold on to. As such, this clause focuses the emphasis upon Christ’s utter unselfishness in laying aside his equality with God.”³⁶

Philippians 2:7

The apostle goes on to explain the nature of true and absolute humility when he qualifies Jesus’ “form” and forfeited “equality” in verse 7 when he states; “but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, *and* being made in the likeness of men” (NASB). The word “emptied” (κενόω > kenow) in verse 7 speaks of a “divestiture of position or prestige”³⁷ and has

³⁵ Bruce, Locations 1871-1876.

³⁶ J. H. Greenlee, *An Exegetical Summary of Philippians*, (Dallas, TX: Summer Institute of Linguistics, 1992), Phil. 2:6.

³⁷ BDAG, 539. The quotation goes on to state; “Of Christ, who gave up the appearance of his divinity and took on the form of a slave.”

been the cause of much debate among scholars.³⁸ However, the interpretation taken in this essay sees Paul's *figurative use* of κενόω (kenow) as a veiling, but retention of the Divine glory and attributes of the eternal Son. Meaning, it is not affirmed, as some do, that the Divine Son "gave up" any essential attributes that are associated with YHWH. God is immutable (Ps. 102:25-27), and hence, cannot change in His being. Rather, Jesus willingly "veiled" His glory and did not, *in most instances* (Matt. 9:4, Lk. 9:29), exercise the rightful use of His Divine attributes. Next, it must be noted that it is the Logos, via the pronoun ἑαυτὸν (eauton, "himself"), who is performing the act of "emptying."³⁹ Meaning, the Son, under no coercion, willingly performed the humble act of κενόω (kenow) in verse 7; thus fitting into the apostle's context and message.

Moreover, the final clause of verse 6 and the first clause of verse 7 have an amazing interrelationship that must be noted; "did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, *but* emptied Himself" (Phil. 2:6b – 2:7a, NASB, emphasis added). The two clauses, interlinked by the conjunction "but" (ἀλλά > alla), explain the order of incarnation. The Son, in the form of God, did not regard His equality temporally prior⁴⁰ to the "Kenosis" and as a result, two "states" of the nature of Christ are presented to the reader in the text. The first is the pre-incarnate, Divine, second member of the Triune Godhead, with all the rights and privileges of YHWH (Phil. 2:6b). The second "state of being" presented by the apostle is that of the "emptied," but still Divine Son, who "became flesh" (Jn. 1:14) to forever become the God-man (Phil. 2:7a).

³⁸ Alternative views of Jesus' "emptying" will not be dealt with in this essay. For a full treatment of the different views of the Kenosis, see: Alva. J. McClain. "The Doctrine of the Kenosis in Philippians 2:5-8." TMS/9/1 (Spring 1998) 85-96.

³⁹ "The point is that Christ was more concerned about rescuing sinful human beings than holding on to his heavenly glory" Greenlee, Phil. 2:6.

⁴⁰ It is noted that the Son was not bound by time-space limitations in eternity past while He held equality with God in verse 6. However, Paul explains Christ's "consideration" and "emptying" in the aorist; hence the use of "temporally prior."

Further explaining the “emptying” of the Son, the apostle goes on to proclaim that the κενώω (kenow) took place not by a subtraction of Divine attributes, but rather, by the addition of human μορφῆ (morphē). This self emptying of Christ is explained by the use of two participles, λαβών (labwn, “to take”)⁴¹ and γενόμενος (genomenos, “to be born, to become”).⁴² Jesus is said to have taken “the form of a servant,” which is then qualified by “being born in the likeness of men.” Hence, the self emptying consisted of the addition of the human nature, where the eternal Son, already possessing the *morphe* of God, takes on human *morphe* at the point of the incarnation. Wayne Grudem states on this issue; “We must first realize that no recognized teacher in the first 1,800 years of church history, including those who were native speakers of Greek, thought that ‘emptied Himself’ in Phil. 2:7 meant that the Son of God gave up some of His divine attributes . . . the text does describe what Jesus did in this ‘emptying’; he did not do it by giving up any of his attributes, but rather by taking ‘the form of a servant’, that is, by coming to live as a man.”⁴³

As previously noted, according to verses 6-7, Jesus is the possessor of two “forms.” Meaning, if Jesus is truly man,⁴⁴ as many would agree, then, He is truly God. To take any other understanding of the uses of μορφῆ (morphē) in verses 6-7 would be equivocation. Hence, the reader is being told that Jesus is both God and man, possessing two natures via His *kenow* and incarnation.

Philippians 2:8

⁴¹ BDAG, 538. The citation goes on to read, “μορφῆν δούλου λ. *put on the form of a slave* Phil 2:7.”

⁴² Ibid, 196.

⁴³ Wayne Grudem. *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), 550.

⁴⁴ It is understood that the μορφῆ of verse 7 is specifically regarding Jesus’ taking the humble position as the servant of God. However, the points of verse 7 cannot be isolated apart from one another. It is the apostle’s intent to relay to the reader that Jesus’ μορφῆ is that of human nature, with the position of servitude being governed by the act of incarnation itself; hence the qualifier; “being born in the likeness of men.”

Verse 8 begins with a reiteration of Paul’s previous statement about the incarnation; “Being found *in appearance* as a man” (Phil. 2:8a, NASB, emphasis added).⁴⁵ Paul, a faithful Jew, seemingly uses a form of parallelism to stress the essential point of Jesus’ “self addition” of humanity; thus qualifying further his use of *morphe* of verses 6-7. The apostle then reiterates his teaching topic of humility in the remainder of the verse; “He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross” (Phil. 2:8b-c, NASB). The eternal Son, the second member of the Trinity, who eternally existed in the “form of God,” willingly took on/added human form to become the obedient “Suffering Servant” (Isa. 53), to die a human death; even a cross death. Note the words of F.F. Bruce concerning the significance of the “cross death” that Jesus willing undertook; “Death on a cross was, in Cicero’s words, ‘the most cruel and abominable form of punishment’ . . . the very word ‘cross,’ he said, ‘should be foreign not only to the body of a Roman citizen, but to his thoughts, his eyes, his ears.’”⁴⁶

Philippians 2:9

Having now explained the act of humility that the Logos undertook, the apostle shifts his thought from humiliation to exaltation when he states in verse 9; “For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name” (NASB). The conjunction *διό* (*dio*) translated “For this reason” by the NASB and “Therefore” by the ESV and Lexham grammatically summarizes all of the previous points (“did not count equality” v. 6, “emptied himself” v. 7, “taking” v. 7, “being born” v. 7, “becoming obedient to the point of death” v. 8) of Christ’s self humiliation.⁴⁷ Greenlee limits the use of *διό* (*dio*) to verse 8 when he

⁴⁵ “in appearance,” *σχήματι*, “‘appearance’ . . . ‘outward appearance’ [BAGD], ‘likeness’ [TEV] . . . This word relates to external appearance . . . In this context this word combines with *μορφή* ‘form’ and *ὁμοίωμα* ‘likeness’ to emphasize Christ’s full identity with mankind. Greenlee, Phil. 2:8.

⁴⁶ Bruce, Locations 1940-1941.

⁴⁷ An appropriate paraphrase would be; “Because of all of this, God has highly exalted Him. . .”

proclaims, “It indicates the consequence (the reward) of Christ’s actions mentioned in 2:8,”⁴⁸ but, this narrow view does not seem to take into account the whole of Paul’s argument throughout the discourse. Rather, the Son’s “consideration,” “emptying,” “taking” and “death” seem to be in view in regards to His subsequent exaltation. Thus, the Son’s act of self humiliation resulted in two acts by the Father; (1) “highly *exalted*” (ὑπερυψώω > *huperupsow*) and (2) “*bestowed* on Him the name which is above every name” (χαρίζομαι > *charizomai*). Here, the question could be raised; “How can the Son, who eternally existed in the ‘form’ of God, who held equality with God be exalted higher than His position of the second person of the Trinity?” The answer to this question is found in Paul’s previous discussion on Christ’s Divine μορφή (*morphe*), humility, emptying, incarnation and humiliation. Jesus is raised back to His previous and rightful position of glory and exhalation that He held pre-incarnation.⁴⁹ However, it is now the God-man who is seated in the position of glorification. Charles Hodge explains;

This divine person, clothed in man’s nature, humbled Himself even unto death, even to the death of the cross. Therefore He (not God, or the divine nature in Christ, but the Theanthropos), is exalted above every name that is named, “that at the name of Jesus (*i.e.*, the name of the Theanthropos, as it is He as a divine person clothed in the nature of man, who is the object of worship), every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth.” This is an exhaustive amplification. It includes the whole rational creation, from the highest archangel to the weakest saint; all, all that have life acknowledge Christ to be what God alone can be, their supreme and absolute Lord.⁵⁰

Hodge’s use of “divine person” and “Theanthropos” are very revealing. As previously stated, it is the entirety of the Son who is now glorified. It is the “God-man” who is now beside the “right hand” of the Father, reigning in glory. Jesus is and forever will be, “the Word” made flesh

⁴⁸ Greenlee, Phil. 2:9.

⁴⁹ C.f. Matt. 28:18, John 17:5, Acts 2:34-35.

⁵⁰ Hodge, 514.

and rightfully exalted as the second person of the Trinity. Famed Greek scholar A.T. Robertson concurs with the presented argument when he states of the exalted God-man; “He had not lost ‘the form of God,’ but He had ‘emptied himself’ of the majesty and dignity in His Pre-incarnate state. This He received again and sat in transcendent glory at the right hand of God on high . . . Paul does not here say in what the ‘superior’ dignity consists which Christ did not have before His Incarnation. I agree with Ellicott that it is His Humanity which was permanently added to His Divinity. He is the Son of man now as well as the Son of God which He was before.”⁵¹

Next, 2:9b, a subordinate clause of 2:9a proclaims that the Son is given “the name which is above every name.” This clause has been no small source of controversy within the circles of scholarship and is highly debated. Is the name given to Jesus the “Tetragrammaton,” that being the name of YHWH? Could it be the human name which the Son already possessed, Jesus? Or, could “the name” be a combination of these two ideas? It is the third of these possibilities⁵² that the author supports in this essay, for a number of reasons. The name give to Jesus is the “Tetragrammaton,” which is proclaimed with the utterance of the name of the God-man, Jesus. First, it is impossible to be granted a name higher than that of YHWH, the Divine name of God. Yet, verse 10, which adds context to the issue at hand, proclaims; “so that at the name of Jesus,” seemingly indicating that it is the name of “Jesus” that is “given” in 2:9b. Moreover, Jesus is not given “a name” according to verse 9. Rather, He is given “τὸ ὄνομα” (“to onoma”) or “the

⁵¹ Archibald T. Robertson, *Paul's Joy in Christ; Studies in Philippians*, (New York, Chicago. Fleming H. Revell Company), Locations 1628-1632.

⁵² There are other positions posited regarding this issue, but, will not be dealt with for the sake of brevity. J.H. Greenlee sets forth the possible orthodox positions; “It is ‘Lord’ [Blm, EBC, EGT, GNC, HNTC, Lt, MNTC, NIC, Pl, TH, TNTC, WBC]. Christ already had the name ‘Jesus’ during his incarnation [EBC]. It is equal to God, the highest possible title and authority [EBC, EGT, GNC, HNTC, MNTC, NIC, TNTC, WBC], the equivalent of Yahweh [GNC, Mou, Pl]. It involves not merely a title but also full authority [HNTC, WBC]. 2. The name is ‘Jesus’, which God has made to be the most exalted and glorious of all names [Alf, El, My(D), WEC] with full divine power and lordship combined [El, My(D)]. 3. It is ‘Jesus Christ’, combining the human and the Messianic names [ICC]. 4. It is ‘Jesus Christ the Lord’ with the full implications of each of the components [WC]. 5. It does not refer to a specific name but to rank and dignity [LT].” Greenlee, Phil. 2:9.

name,” which seems to correspond with the Divine name of YHWH.⁵³ Paul’s argument is clear when the whole of the “Carmen Christi” is considered. Jesus, having been in eternity past, in the μορφῆ (morphē) of θεός (theos) and equal to θεός (theos), willing surrendered that equality and emptied Himself. The result of this “emptying” was that of the God-man, who willing took the form of a servant to die in obedience for the sins of God’s people. He is then restored to His previous position of glory, which was rightly His as the second member of the Trinity, but now as the incarnate Christ. Hence, it is the one man Jesus, with both natures, human and Divine, that is exalted. Therefore, to proclaim the name of Jesus is to proclaim the name of YHWH; a point further indicated by Paul’s citation of Isaiah 45:23, in Philippians 2:10.

Philippians 2:10

Verse 10, a subordinate clause of verse 9, notes Jesus’ vindication with a citation from Isaiah 45:23 and also includes three sub-points. The verse reads; “so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth” (NASB). The conjunction ἵνα (ina, “so that”) is vital in that it demonstrates the intent of the Father for His Son. The Father’s purpose in the exaltation of the Son is for obeisance and vindication due to His humility, rejection by His own people (John 1:12) and cross death; “Therefore God has highly exalted Him . . . so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow . . .” (Phil. 2:9a, 2:10a, ESV).⁵⁴

It is interesting to note that the citation of Isaiah 45:23 helps to explain the “form” and “equality” of verse 6. Here, the apostle uses a direct Old Testament citation that can only be applied to YHWH; thus, further adding to His point of humility. Moreover, the submission that is

⁵³ J.H. Greenlee states in support of this premises; “The definite article with this noun indicates that it is a name which is known and honored.” Greenlee, Phil. 2:9.

⁵⁴ Isaiah 45:23 is in view in verse 10, which is noted by its direct citation; “I have sworn by Myself, The word has gone forth from My mouth in righteousness And will not turn back, That to Me every knee will bow, every tongue will swear *allegiance*” (NASB).

to be declared by all who are; (1) in Heaven, (2) on the earth and (3) under the earth, finds a fuller fulfillment in verse 11 where it is proclaimed that “every tongue will confess” that “κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς” (“kurios Iesus Christos”). The use of the term “LORD” for the Son in this context is quite revealing, given the context of Philippians 2:5-11 and Paul’s citation of Isaiah 45:23. In the LXX, the term “LORD” is substituted for the Divine name of YHWH. The Greek word for “LORD” is that of “κύριος” (kurios), the very same term used of the Son in verse 11. Point-in-fact, the context of Isaiah 45, which Paul has in view via his citation, demands the proclamation of Jesus Christ as YHWH. In Isaiah 45:3, it is clear that it is the Covenant God of Israel speaking when the text declares, “ἐγὼ κύριος ὁ θεὸς,” (“ego kurios ho theos” > “I LORD the God”). Yet, in the Hebrew, it is the name of YHWH (יהוה) that is in view in verse 3. Silva proclaims the following on this view; “Whether or not Paul composed the Christ-hymn, it patently expresses his own conviction that the worship of Jesus Christ does not compromise Israel’s monotheistic faith. On the contrary, Jesus Christ the righteous Savior bears the name of the one Lord, Yahweh, ‘to the glory of God the Father.’”⁵⁵ With these words, correspondence is found between the author’s argument, scholarship and Paul’s citation of Isaiah 45:23.

Philippians 2:11

Having already presented the Deity, humility and exaltation of the Son in preceding text, verse 11 is a continuation of the apostle’s argument from verses 2:9b through 2:10. All in Heaven, earth and under the earth will bow and profess that Jesus Christ is YHWH and this to the Glory of God the Father. Paul’s words in 2:11b fill in the purpose clause found in the beginning of verse 9 and also relate to intra-Trinitarian communion. It was the Father’s purpose to glorify and vindicate the Son according to the humility and obedience He displayed (vs. 6-8).

⁵⁵ Silva, 112.

This glorification includes the exaltation of the God-man to His former pre-incarnate position of glory and the proclamation and conformation that Jesus Christ is YHWH, the second member of the Triune “Godhead.” Thus, to glorify one member of the Trinity is to glorify all of the members of the Trinity, which is to glorify the one “being” of God; hence, Paul’s words or usage of the “Christ Hymn” to close his argument.

CONCLUSION AND PRACTICAL APPLICATION

In conclusion, it has been argued that the Son of God, the Logos, has eternally held the μορφή (morphē) of God and as a result, is very God of very God. The Son, in eternity past and under no coercion, forfeited His exalted position and humbled Himself by, (1) taking the form of a servant and (2) being made in the likeness of man. Contrary to modern thought, the “Kenosis” was the addition of a true, human nature and not the subtraction of Deity. Having added human form, the Son was then obedient to the Father to the point of death on a cross. Because of this, the Father was pleased to exalt the Son back to His previously held position of glory and vindicated the Logos by giving Him the Divine name. Thus, to proclaim that Jesus Christ is Lord is equivalent to proclaiming that Jesus Christ is YHWH. And, to this God-man, every knee will bow and every tongue will confess full obedience, to the glory of the Father in perfect intra-Trinitarian union.

Next, the above summary fits within the teaching point of Paul to the church at Philippi. Jesus Christ, having held His eternal position of glory (Phil. 2:6), left that position because of the needs of others (Phil. 2:7). The Lord Jesus counted others more significant than Himself (Phil. 2:3) and in perfect humility, cared not for His own interests, but rather, for the interest of others (Phil. 2:4). As a result, mankind can now find redemption in the finished work of Christ, the God-man who humbled Himself for His elect to bring about the redemption of a people for

Himself. Thus, the church at Philippi and by greater application, all of Christendom should have the mind of Christ; a mind which is humble and sensitive to the circumstances of others.

The practical implications of this section of Scripture are numerous. First, it leads the reader to a greater and fuller understanding of the person of Christ. Presented within the text of the “Carmen Christi” is a brief commentary of the eternality of the Logos which presents His full Deity as the second member of the Trinity. Also in view is the intra-Trinitarian union which exists between Father and Son. A perfect union which presents to the reader a template for one’s own interpersonal relations within the family, and, as Paul explains elsewhere, within the marriage union as well.⁵⁶ Moreover, the text of Philippians 2:6-11 presents to the reader the ultimate example of humility. Within this text, the reader is challenged and informed as to the true nature of the Christian walk, as patterned by the Logos. Paul’s proclamation and challenge is to be of “one mind” and “one spirit” and this is to be patterned after the work, nature and character of the Son. The keyword of humility as found in this chapter is all important because it speaks to the inner nature of the individual Christian. Hence, if there were any in the church at Philippi which had attained a greater social status, wealth, or reputation, they were to set it aside for the benefit of others within the congregation. In a greater application of this text, all persons who name the name of Christ are to recognize the teaching point of Paul regarding the humility of the eternal Son and do likewise. Hence, the teaching lesson of Paul, even within its first century context, carries with it a universal application for all ages of Christians.

⁵⁶ 1 Cor. 11:2-16

APPENDIX A

Sermon Outline

Christ's Humility: Our Example

Philippians 2:5-11

Introduction

- 1) Philippians 2:5: One Mind in Christ: A Call to Humility
 - a) "Same mind" (v. 2)
 - b) "One love" (v. 2)
 - c) "One mind" (v. 2)
 - d) The welfare of others (vs. 3-4)
- 2) Philippians 2:6: True Humility: The Divine Son
 - a) Define: "form of God" (*morphe*)
 - b) Explanation: Christ's forfeited equality
 - c) Illustration: Rights and privileges forfeited in humility
- 3) Philippians 2:7: Christ's Emptying: Christ the Man
 - a) Defined: Kenosis
 - i) Taking the form of a servant
 - ii) Being made in the likeness of man
 - b) Illustration: Christ's emptying came by way of addition
 - i) A true example of humility
- 4) Philippians 2:8: The Ultimate Sacrifice: The Suffering Servant
 - a) Humility and Obedience Defined
 - b) Illustration: Christ's Sacrifice
 - i) Obedience
 - ii) Death
- 5) Philippians 2:9: Christ's Exaltation: Return to Glory
 - a) God's Reward
 - b) Illustration: the Father gives "the name"
 - c) Defined: what name?
- 6) Philippians 2:10: Homage to the Son: YHWH the Son
 - a) Illustration: Isaiah 45:23
 - b) Illustration" Psalm 2:12
- 7) Philippians 2:11: Jesus Christ is God: The Union of Father and Son
 - a) Defended: Jesus Christ is YHWH

- i) Isaiah 45:23
- ii) Psalm 102:25-27 – c.f. Hebrews 1:10-12
- b) Explained: Inter-Trinitarian Union
 - i) Phil. 2:11b
 - ii) John 17:5 (imperative)

Conclusion: The Christian should show humility because the eternal Son displayed the greatest act of humility for the elect.

(Please Note: this sermon outline is based on a verse by verse exposition of Philippians 2:5-11. It is noted that due to the depth of this topic, the contents of this outline may need to be sectioned into two sermons.)

APPENDIX B

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